

WESTLAKE-GLADSTONE

# Vital Signs<sup>®</sup>

Community in Focus 2025:  
Discovering the Big Picture



**Big Grass**  
Community Foundation



## About the Big Grass Community Foundation (BGCF)

The Big Grass Community Foundation, Inc., was established and incorporated in 2004 as a non-profit, charitable organization, with a stated goal to build a pool of charitable funds to serve its respective community. The pool of funds is never spent, but the income from it is invested in local health, recreation, sports, education, environment and heritage projects, among others, to improve our quality of life. The foundation is run by local volunteers, without remuneration, for the benefit of our community.

## A Message from the Board Chair, Terry Fehr

Since 2004, Big Grass Community Foundation has been providing grants for community projects and activities. The first few years were modest, both in terms of dollars granted and activities for this foundation. Slowly, over time, our foundation has grown funds to provide more meaningful grants and leadership in our community.

As the role of BGCF blossoms, WestLake-Gladstone should expect to see more leadership from our foundation. To that end, when Endow Manitoba offered the opportunity for a Vital Signs pilot project, we felt obligated, honoured and excited to accept on behalf of our community. This is a wonderful opportunity for the community of WestLake-Gladstone to learn about itself. The 2025 Vital Signs project will provide the municipality, businesses, charitable sector leadership and potential new residents detailed data on who lives here, what we do and what we think about. All who read this report will have the data and information to make informed critical decisions.



We are grateful to our sponsors, Manitoba Blue Cross, Endow Manitoba, WestLake-Gladstone Municipality, Gladstone Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Neepawa-Gladstone Co-op. As well, we appreciate the time citizens have donated to fill in our survey, attend focus groups and our launch. I appreciate the efforts of directors of BGCF, and Vital Signs committee members, for the time they have donated to make Vital Signs the success it has become.

This report has been published for you to use, and we encourage everyone to spend some time reading our Vital Signs report. Use this information simply to learn more about where you live or to make an investment decision in the municipality. Together, we can help our community grow.

## A Message from Endow Manitoba

Endow Manitoba, a program of The Winnipeg Foundation, was established in 2018 to “advance the sustainability, growth, and impact of Manitoba’s community foundation network.” As Canada’s most generous province, Manitoba exemplifies the spirit of giving, with the work of community foundations serving as a testament to this generosity.

Community foundations hold a special place within their communities. They represent a “meeting space” between smart and caring donors and the organizations undertaking critical community work, creating lasting impact that enhances community well-being now and into the future. These foundations embody the heart and soul of their communities, reflecting the shared values and aspirations of the people they serve.

Endow Manitoba would like to acknowledge the exceptional leadership of the Big Grass Community Foundation, the Vital Signs Committee and the unwavering support of the communities. The undertaking of their first Vital Signs initiative is truly commendable, as it brings the community together and generates meaningful insights that inform and inspire collective action toward positive change.

The Big Grass Community Foundation’s efforts are not just strengthening the fabric of their community, but also setting an inspiring example for others across our province and across our nation. Together, community foundations are building a brighter future for Manitoba.

## Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge we are in Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Dakota, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dene peoples, and homeland of the Red River Métis Nation. We affirm our commitment to working in partnership with Indigenous communities in the spirit of truth and reconciliation to enhance quality of life in our community.



## WestLake-Gladstone Vital Signs Team and Contributors

### Big Grass Community Foundation Board of Directors:

Terry Fehr (Chair), Robin Richardson (Past Chair), Ken Kinley (Treasurer), Sharon Vercaigne (Secretary), Kelvin Bueckert, Lisa Sneesby, and Patty Thomson

**Vital Signs Committee:** Shirley Guenther, Sharon Vercaigne, Kelvin Bueckert, Kate Halashewski, Jeff Fehr, Ken Kinley, Wilf Lehmann, and Terry Fehr (Chair)

Prepared by **Gray Matter Insights Inc.**

(Kara Gray, author & project lead; Keri-Lynn Turney, research support)

**Photography:** Paul Quaye and Kara Gray

## What is VitalSigns?

Vital Signs is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada. The Vital Signs trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada.



The Big Grass Community Foundation’s 2025 Vital Signs initiative is a community “check-up” that measures the vitality of the community, identifies challenges and opportunities and supports action on issues that are critical to the community’s well-being. The report draws on a comprehensive well-being framework and community engagement to reflect what matters in the community. The Vital Signs report combines local data and community input to provide a comprehensive snapshot of well-being in the communities of WestLake-Gladstone.

Using the evidence-based approach of this report, all community leaders and stakeholders can better understand the challenges in the community and collaborate on the opportunities. For the Big Grass Community Foundation, the report will inform our governance, guide our responsive grant-making and help foster collaborative partnerships. The goal of the report is to empower decision-makers, policy-makers and residents alike to take action, aiming to improve the quality of life for all in the region.

## Aknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations for their participation and assistance: Southern Health – Santé Sud, Parkland Regional Library, Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone, Westbourne Cemetery, Gladstone Area Senior Support, Gladstone United Church Community Food Cupboard, Lakeview Children’s Centre, Little Pirates Children’s Centre, Happy Rock Children’s Centre, Childcare Family Access Network, Pine Creek School Division, Government of Manitoba, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Assiniboine College, Nurture to Nourish Counselling.

## Table of Contents

- 1 Messages & Acknowledgements
  - About the Big Grass Community Foundation
  - Message from Endow Manitoba
  - Land Acknowledgement
- 2 What is Vital Signs?
  - Table of Contents
  - WestLake-Gladstone Overview
- 3 How to Read the Report
- 4 If WestLake-Gladstone Were a Village of 100
- 5 How is WestLake-Gladstone Doing? (Grades Overview)
- 6-7 Community Resilience
- 8-9 Standard of Living
- 10-11 Education & Learning
- 12-13 Environment
- 14-15 Health & Wellness
- 16-17 Culture & Belonging
- 18-19 Arts & Recreation
- 20-21 Civic & Democratic Engagement
- 22-23 Why Does Data Matter in a Community?
- 24-25 Youth Survey Results
- 26 Methodology & Sources
- 27 Ready to Make a Difference

# How to Read the Report

This Vital Signs report highlights important data and insights to help understand our community's strengths and areas for growth. Here's a guide to navigating the content.

## Domain

A domain is an area, or category of community life that contributes to the overall well-being of the community. While there are multiple domains, they are all overlapping and interlinked, creating a robust picture of well-being.

## Key Indicators

These are marked with a key icon and are crucial to calculating the overall grade for each domain. They provide essential insights into the most important aspects of each well-being domain.

## Grade

Each domain is assigned a letter grade based on the assessment of key indicators (80%) combined with community survey scores (20%).

## Contextual Indicators

Some indicators, listed without key icons, are included to provide additional context and background information. While they help paint a fuller picture of the domain, they **do not** directly affect the grade.

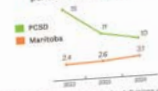


### Homeschool Enrollment Trends

In September 2024, 110 students living in the Pine Creek School Division (PCSD) catchment area were home-schooled, representing about 2% of Manitoba's total home-schooled students.

The chart below shows the number of home-schooled students per 100 students enrolled in schools. For instance, in 2022, for every 100 students enrolled in PCSD schools, there were 15 home-schooled students. This fell to 10 in 2024, while Manitoba overall increased from 2.4 to 3.3 during the same period.

### Homeschool Students per 100 Enrolled Students



Note: Manitoba numbers include public, school divisions and First Nations schools under educational agreements.

Source: PCSD, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

### Scholarships and Education Grants

The Big Grass Community Foundation has awarded more than \$37,000 in scholarships and education-related grants since 2020. Annual support has ranged from just over \$2,000 in 2021 to nearly \$8,800 in 2025, reflecting the foundation's growing investment in students and community learning. These totals include both direct scholarships/bursaries and education-related grants such as support for preschools, day care, school groups and parent advisory councils.



Source: Big Grass Community Foundation

### Youth Perspectives on Education

In the 2025 survey of local Grades 10-12 students, about 67% of respondents said school is at least probably preparing them for life, and over half plan to attend university, with 59% well for life, and over half plan to attend university, with 59% already saving for post-secondary education. At the same time, students called for more diverse classes, from life skills and trades like taxes, budgeting, agriculture, and wood shop to arts such as dance and fashion design, AP classes, and cultural language courses beyond French.

Source: 2025 Youth Survey

### Assiniboine College Rural Rotating Site

While Assiniboine College has permanent sites, its rural, rotating campuses give learners in the province a chance to take the two-year Practical Nursing program closer to home. The program rotates throughout the province every two years, with the next intake for Neepawa in January 2027. 25 seats are available in this full-time course.

Source: Assiniboine College

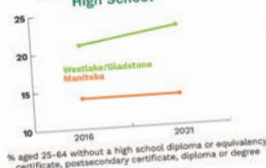
"Online courses help, but they don't work for every student. Some kids thrive, others fall behind."

### High School Graduation Rates

In 2023, the six-year high school graduation rate for Pine Creek School Division's (PCSD) was 91%, meaning that 91% of students who started grade nine in 2017 graduated in a public or funded independent school in Manitoba by 2023, slightly above the provincial average of 89%, and the same as the local rate in 2018. This rate highlights the division's effectiveness in supporting students to complete their high school education, which is key to increasing future educational and employment opportunities.

Source: Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

### Have Not Graduated High School



Source: Statistics Canada

"Teachers here really care, but they're juggling more and more. Kids with extra needs just don't always get the support."

### Post-Secondary Education Rates

Postsecondary attainment provides people with greater mobility and access to higher-paying employment opportunities, making this an important area for community development.

Source: Statistics Canada

### Post-Secondary Certificate, Diploma or Degree

% of population aged 25-64, 2021



### Pupil-to-Educator Ratio

In 2022/23, Pine Creek School Division's pupil-to-educator ratio was 10.6, slightly up from 10.2 in 2018/19, but still below the Manitoba average of 13.1. A lower ratio means fewer students per educator, giving PCSD students more adult support than the provincial average.

This provincial measure includes all teachers as well as school-based administrators (principals, vice-principals, department heads, coordinators), but not division office staff. Because it counts more than just classroom teachers, the ratio is lower than what families experience day to day.

PCSD also reports its average classroom ratio, which in 2022/23, Pine Creek School Division's pupil-to-educator ratio was 10.6, slightly up from 10.2 in 2018/19, but still below the Manitoba average of 13.1. A lower ratio means fewer students per educator, giving PCSD students more adult support than the provincial average.

Source: Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, PCSD

### Community Insight

In the focus groups, participants described education as both a priority and a challenge in Westlake-Gladstone. Concerns were raised about the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers. Frequent turnover was seen as disrupting stability and leading to the loss of trusted, experienced staff. Parents questioned whether students are leaving high school with the skills they need for the future and worried that young people who struggle, or those affected by bullying, do not always get the support they require.

At the same time, participants pointed to reasons for hope and opportunities to act. They noted that graduation rates have improved and that local adult programs, such as those offered through GASSP, are valuable and accessible. Residents saw potential in expanding digital literacy training, evening classes, and post-secondary programs in areas such as nursing or trades. They felt that investing in schools, early learning, and lifelong education would create stronger opportunities for all ages and help the community build on its strengths.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:

- Their satisfaction with their level of education
- The possibility of good options for distance and online learning courses

They were least positive about:

- Personal interest opportunities (e.g., art classes, hobby groups, or personal development courses)
- Flexible or part-time learning options for adults

BIG GRASS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION 13

## Quotes

Throughout the report, you will find quotes from community reflection sessions and survey responses. These quotes provide personal insights that help bring the data, and the story of our community, to life.

## Community Insight

After analysing the data and survey results, we hosted focus groups with residents to discuss preliminary findings and to gather feedback. The *Community Reflection* sections include insights and experiences shared during these discussions, offering a local perspective on the data.

## Community Perspective

Survey responses are ranked using average positive response levels, from high (*very satisfied or strongly agree*) to low (*very dissatisfied or strongly disagree*). High-scoring areas reflect aspects that residents take pride in, while low-scoring areas highlight opportunities for improvement.

## Legend

**PCSD:** Pine Creek School Division

**SHSS:** Southern Health - Santé Sud (Regional Health Authority)

**Westlake-Gladstone:** Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone, Census Subdivision

# Our Framework of Community Well-being

Measuring well-being provides a “big picture” of a community’s health, resilience and vitality. The results of this research can then be used to develop policies and practices that support community well-being in the long-term.



*These domains are interconnected, and investing in all of them in a balanced manner is important to a community’s overall health, resilience, and vitality.*

As you read through the report, ask yourself:



1. What gives you hope?
2. How can you get involved in making our community stronger?
3. Why is this area important to you and your family?

# If Westlake-Gladstone were a VILLAGE of 100

Source: Village of 100 shows the proportion of the population for each characteristic and is based on **Statistics Canada's 2021 Census** data for the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone (CSD), except where noted otherwise.

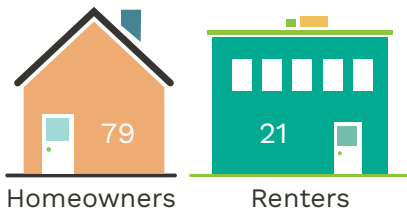


## Citizenship

The estimated local population grew by **12%** over the last decade (2014-2024)



## Housing Type by Tenure

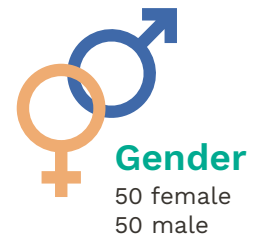


## Marital Status

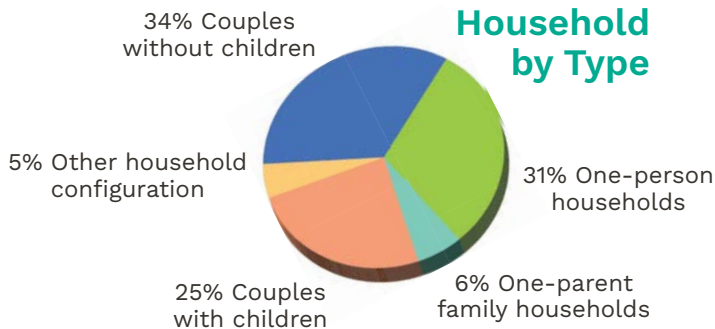
54 married  
8 living common-law  
26 never married  
2 separated  
4 divorced  
6 widowed

## Indigenous Identity

13 Indigenous Identity  
87 Non-Indigenous Identity



## Household by Type



"Other household configuration" includes multigenerational households, multiple-census-family households, one-census-family households with additional persons, and two-or-more-person non-census-family households.

## Unemployment Rate

% of people, in the work force without jobs, 2021



## Employment Rate

	Total	♂	♀
Westlake-Gladstone	63	67	59
Manitoba	59	63	55

♂ Men      ♀ Women

## Home Dwellings

## Population of WestLake-Gladstone



That's a 12% increase over the last decade (2014-2024).

Manitoba and Canada both grew by about 15% between 2014 and 2024.

Source: Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0155-01

# How is WestLake-Gladstone doing?



Overall, WestLake-Gladstone scored a **B-** across all eight domains, reflecting a generally positive but varied experience across the community's key areas of well-being.

## Community Resilience

This domain measures the community's ability to adapt and thrive amid challenges, focusing on public safety, transportation and the local economy. The key indicator score of **4.3** reflects a low crime rate, moderate business density and a low unemployment rate. The **community satisfaction score of 3.0** ranks Community Resilience **6th** out of 8 well-being areas.

**A-**

## Standard of Living

This domain reflects economic stability, affordability, and the balance between work and leisure. The key indicator score of **2.9** reflects good housing affordability, average commute times, and a higher poverty rate than the provincial average. The **community satisfaction score of 4.6** ranks Standard of Living as **1st** out of 8 well-being areas.

**B-**

## Education & Learning

This domain assesses access to and quality of lifelong learning opportunities. The key indicator score of **2.8** reflects challenges in postsecondary attainment, and high school graduation rates. The **community satisfaction score of 3.0** ranks Education & Learning **5th** out of 8 well-being areas.

**C+**

## Environment

This domain captures the community's commitment to sustainability, resource management, and preparedness for environmental challenges. The key indicator score of **3.4** reflects improving soil conservation efforts and room for improvement in awareness of emergency plans. The **community satisfaction score of 3.4** ranks Environment **4th** out of 8 well-being areas.

**B**

## Health & Wellness

This domain measures physical and mental health, as well as access to healthcare. The key indicator score of **2.6** reflects challenges such as low regional childhood immunization rates and a limited supply of family doctors. These are balanced by moderate self-ratings of personal mental and physical health and strengthened by a high proportion of survey respondents reporting that they have a primary care provider. The **community satisfaction score of 2.5** ranks Health & Wellness **8th** out of 8 well-being areas.

**C**

## Culture & Belonging

This domain focuses on building a close-knit, inclusive community through cultural participation. The key indicator score of **3.1** reflected moderate rates of participation in community and cultural groups, a higher than average sense of belonging, but also some reports of discrimination. The **community satisfaction score of 4.1** ranks Culture & Belonging **2nd** out of 8 well-being areas.

**B**

## Arts & Recreation

This domain assesses opportunities for participation in arts, leisure and sports activities including shows, events, clubs and recreational facilities. The key indicator score of **3.0** reflects the scores of various survey questions, in comparison to other vital signs communities. Overall, the **community satisfaction score of 3.7** ranks Arts & Recreation **3rd** out of 8 well-being areas; however, the youth survey takers ranked their satisfaction here as 8th.

**B-**

## Civic & Democratic Engagement

This domain assesses civic and democratic involvement and engagement. The key indicator score of **3.5** reflects fairly strong volunteerism and charitable giving levels, while moderate voter turnout impacted the score. The **community satisfaction score of 2.7** ranks Civic & Democratic Engagement **7th** out of 8 well-being areas.

**B**

## Want to learn more?


Read on for detailed information about how WestLake-Gladstone is doing in each domain of well-being, and to learn about ways to act.




# Community Resilience

The community's ability to withstand challenges and prosper, with a focus on access to services, a robust local economy and job market, public safety and transportation/infrastructure.



 **key indicator score:** **4.3**  
80%

 **community satisfaction score:** **3.0**  
20%

## 🔑 Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate, which is the percentage of people in the workforce who would like to have jobs but do not, is a key indicator of economic health and resilience. In 2021, the unemployment rate in WestLake-Gladstone was **2.6%**, significantly lower than the Manitoba rate of **8.3%**, and lower than the 2016 local rate of **3.9%**.

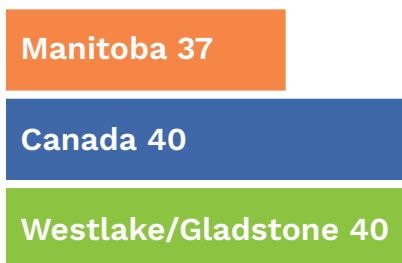
Source: Statistics Canada

## 🔑 Businesses with Employees, per Capita

This is an indicator of the health of the local economy, reflecting the density and diversity of businesses in the area. In 2024, there were **105** businesses with employees in WestLake-Gladstone.

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 33-10-0763-01

### Businesses with employees per 1,000 people aged 15+, 2024



*Businesses with multiple sites are counted per site.*

## Self-Employment

In 2021, **25%** of workers in WestLake-Gladstone were self-employed, compared to **12%** in Manitoba.

Source: Statistics Canada

*“Jobs are here, but not the kind young people want. They end up leaving, and that makes it harder for the community to thrive long-term.”*

## Getting Around

According to the 2025 Community Survey, residents experience a mix of everyday travel and long-distance challenges.

- **92%** reported driving more than 75 km in the past year to reach a hospital or attend a medical appointment. **14%** said they needed a ride for such trips.
- Closer to home, **46%** walked or biked to work, school, or shopping, while **27%** carpooled.



Source: 2025 Community Survey

## Road Maintenance

WestLake-Gladstone maintains more than **600** miles of roads. Due to the operating expenses of maintenance and gravel, only roads where people reside, based on the shortest available route to a provincial road, are cleared. The municipality cannot clear all four urban communities in one day, in addition to ensuring rural roads and bus routes are maintained.

Source: Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone website

## Handi-Van Service

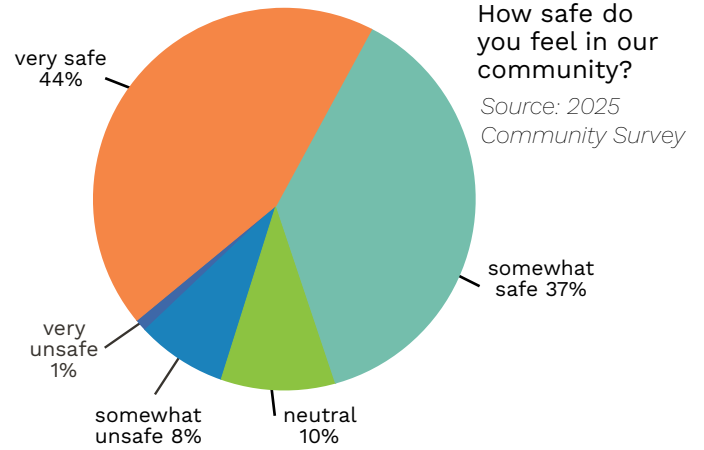
Northwest Handi-Transit provides transportation services to qualified users living in WestLake-Gladstone. Bookings have grown from **234** in 2023 to **356** in 2024, with **114** already by mid-April 2025. Many trips are charters, carrying up to 15 people to museums, casinos, and concerts, while local riders often enjoy **\$2** Toonie Tuesdays.

Source: Gladstone Area Senior Support Program

*“We’ve been lucky to feel safe, but it’s the distance to services that wears people down. Having to travel an hour just for an appointment isn’t sustainable.”*

## Perceptions of Safety

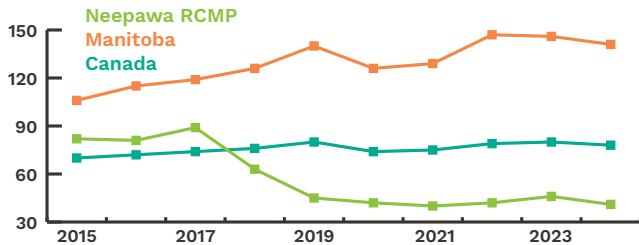
When asked “How safe do you feel in our community”, **75%** of youth survey takers and **81%** of adult survey takers felt very safe or somewhat safe.



## Crime Severity Index

The Crime Severity Index (CSI) tracks the seriousness of police-reported crime. In 2024, the Neepawa RCMP reported a CSI of **41**, well below Manitoba’s CSI of **141** and Canada’s CSI of **78**, indicating comparatively less severe crime in the area. than Manitoba and Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada



## Public Transportation Options

When asked how satisfied they were with public transportation options, **40%** of survey takers said the question did not apply to them; however, of those that responded, **15%** were satisfied, and **55%** of respondents were unsatisfied.

Source: 2025 Community Survey

*“If you don’t drive, you’re basically stuck. There’s no bus, and walking in winter isn’t realistic. That makes it hard for seniors and anyone who can’t afford a car.”*

## Licensed Childcare Spaces

Childcare is a vital service for working families, and supports the local economy. As of summer 2025, WestLake-Gladstone has **102** provincially subsidized licensed childcare spaces, including **80** early childhood spaces (infant and preschool) and **22** school-age spaces. These are located in Gladstone (Happy Rock), Plumas (Little Pirates), and Langruth (Lakeview). All centres report no vacancies and waitlists ranging from one to two years.

Plans are in place to expand: Little Pirates in Plumas is working toward doubling its early childhood capacity from **20** to **40** spaces and launching a 15-space school-age program in 2025, with the potential to add more in the future.

Sources: Government of Manitoba; Lakeview Children’s Centre; Little Pirates Children’s Centre; Happy Rock Children’s Centre

## Community Insight

In the focus groups, residents spoke about limited local shopping options, a shortage of affordable housing, and concerns about transportation for seniors and others without reliable vehicles. Parents said daycare is one of the biggest barriers, with a shortage of licensed spaces making it difficult for parents to work or study. Public safety was also raised, with some saying there is less visible policing than in the past.

Infrastructure was a recurring theme. Roads in rural areas and within towns were seen as an ongoing challenge, with upkeep, potholes, and snow clearing not always meeting residents’ needs. These were described as frustrations that make daily life harder rather than insurmountable problems. Participants also expressed concern about the reliability of cell coverage in Plumas and Langruth; this was seen as more than an inconvenience, since it affects the ability to call for help in emergencies.

Despite these concerns, participants also highlighted strengths. They described neighbours as willing to step up when others are in need and valued the sense of connection that comes from living in smaller communities.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Their connection and access to the internet
2. Their commute to work or school
3. Winter maintenance and snow clearing of streets and local roads

They were least positive about:

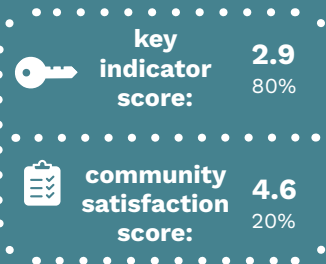


1. Being able to meet shopping and supply needs locally
2. The jobs available for young adults in the community
3. The public transportation options in the community



# Standard of Living

This domain reflects economic stability, affordability of living essentials and the balance between work and leisure.



## Household Income

Household after-tax income grew faster than the rate of inflation between 2015 and 2020. The average after-tax income of households in WestLake-Gladstone grew to **\$63,600** in 2020\*, which was **6%** higher than in 2015, after adjusting for inflation. The Manitoba average was higher, at **\$80,400**, and grew by **15%** over the same time period.

\* Covid-19 income support benefits are included in 2020 income.

Source: Statistics Canada

## Poverty Rates, 2020

Percent of people with incomes below the poverty line (Market Basket Measure – cost of food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other basic needs)

### Overall



### In One-Parent Households



### Youth (17 & Under)



### Adults Ages 65+



Source: Statistics Canada

## Housing Affordability

In 2021, **12%** of households in WestLake-Gladstone spent **30% or more** of their before-tax income on shelter, slightly below the Manitoba average of **17%**. This rate has been steady since 2016. Shelter costs include rent, utilities and municipal services for renters, and mortgage payments, property taxes, condo fees and utilities for homeowners.

Source: Statistics Canada

*"Housing is the biggest pressure. Seniors can't find what they need, families can't get into the market, and supportive housing is backed up. It affects everyone."*

## Housing Costs, 2021

2021 (non-farm, non-reserve)

**Average value of dwellings: \$154,000** (↓2% since 2016)

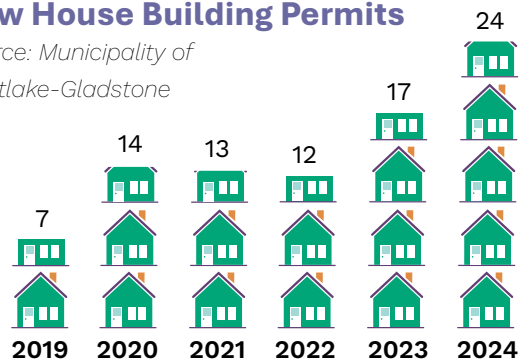
**Median Monthly Shelter Costs (Tenant): \$700** (↓1% since 2016)

**Median Monthly Shelter Costs (Owner): \$568** (↑15% since 2016)

Source: Statistics Canada

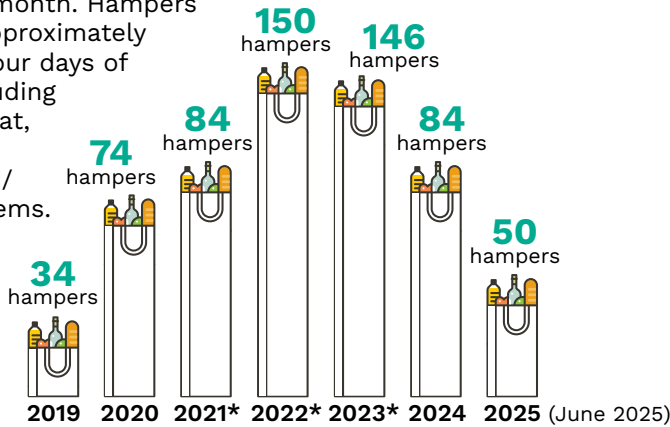
## New House Building Permits

Source: Municipality of Westlake-Gladstone



## Food Cupboard

The Gladstone United Church Community Food Cupboard, located in the church, is an emergency food resource for anyone living in WestLake-Gladstone. Clients can book an appointment to receive a hamper once per month. Hampers include approximately three to four days of food, including frozen meat, bread and household/hygiene items.



Note: \*For the second half of 2021, 2022 and 2023, clients were eligible to receive two hampers per month. In 2024, it returned to one hamper per month, but hamper size increased.

Source: Gladstone United Church Community Food Cupboard

## Financial Hardships

We asked whether survey takers had experienced any financial hardships in the past year. **24%** cut back on family recreation or sports; **13%** worked when sick for lack of paid sick days; **12%** worked overtime or multiple jobs; **7%** forewent essential medication or treatment; **6%** missed or made late housing payments; **5%** missed meals; **4%** delayed or withdrew from education. Overall, **67%** reported none.

Note: Select-all-that-apply; percentages do not sum to 100.

Source: 2025 Community survey

## DID YOU KNOW?

Since 2022, the local food cupboard has partnered with WMCI and the Neepawa-Gladstone Co-op for an annual Back to School food drive. Grade 7/8 students deliver reusable bags around Gladstone, and community members fill them with donations to leave on their front steps. Each year, the drive has collected over **2,100 pounds (950 kg)** of non-perishable food to support local families.

*“Groceries, gas, kids’ sports — it all adds up. You can’t always say yes when your kids want to join something.”*

## Commute Time

The amount of time it takes to commute to work or school is a simple signal of quality of life since shorter trips mean lower costs and more available time.

30 minutes or less, 2021



**Westlake-Gladstone 72%** **Manitoba 73%**

Source: Statistics Canada

## Community Insight

In focus groups, people highlighted expanding housing options as an important step to strengthen quality of life. Affordable rentals assisted living for seniors, and supportive housing were all identified as priorities so that people can remain in their community at every stage of life. Seniors on fixed incomes also need affordable housing that works alongside rising costs for utilities, prescriptions, and daily essentials.

Residents said addressing affordability in everyday life is just as important as housing. Groceries, gas, and children’s activities were all seen as areas where costs are stretching families thin. Supporting local businesses and attracting more shops and services would help reduce the need to travel elsewhere for essentials, while keeping more economic activity in the community.

At the same time, participants stressed the importance of protecting the area’s natural advantages such as affordable taxes, short commutes, and a slower pace of life compared to larger centres.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Their housing situation
2. Their vehicle or transportation options
3. The quality of food they can afford

They were least positive about:



1. Supportive housing options available for individuals living with disabilities
2. Supportive housing options available for seniors
3. Local housing availability



# Education & Learning

The educational landscape of the community, from childhood to adult programs, focusing on accessibility and quality for lifelong learning.



**key indicator score:** 2.8  
80%

**community satisfaction score:** 2.4  
20%

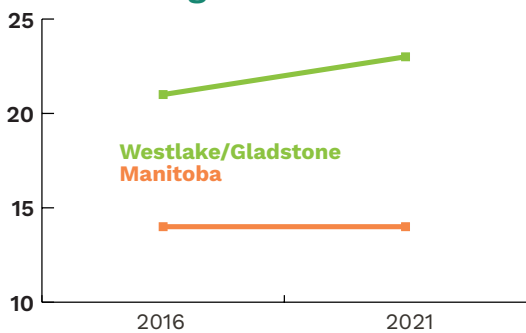
## High School Graduation Rates

In 2023, the six-year high school graduation rate for Pine Creek School Division's (PCSD) was **91%**, meaning that 91% of students who started grade nine in 2017 graduated in a public or funded independent school in Manitoba by 2023, slightly above the provincial average of **89%**, and the same as the local rate in 2018.

This rate highlights the division's effectiveness in supporting students to complete their high school education, which is key to increasing future educational and employment opportunities.

Source: Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

### Have Not Graduated High School



% aged 25-64 without a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree

Source: Statistics Canada

*"Teachers here really care, but they're juggling more and more. Kids with extra needs just don't always get the support."*

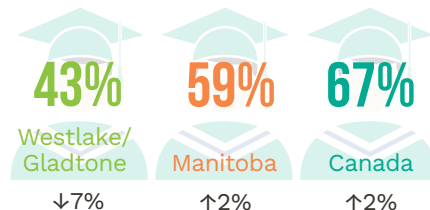
## Post-Secondary Education Rates

Postsecondary attainment provides people with greater mobility and access to higher-paying employment opportunities, making this an important area for community development.

Source: Statistics Canada

### Post-Secondary Certificate, Diploma or Degree

% of population aged 25-64, 2021



Compared to 2016

## Pupil-to-Educator Ratio

In 2022/23, Pine Creek School Division's **pupil-to-educator** ratio was **10.6**, slightly up from **10.2** in 2018/19, but still below the Manitoba average of **13.1**. A lower ratio means fewer students per educator, giving PCSD students more adult support than the provincial average.

This provincial measure includes **all teachers as well as school-based administrators** (principals, vice-principals, department heads, coordinators), but not division office staff. Because it counts more than just classroom teachers, the ratio is lower than what families experience day to day.

PCSD also reports its **average classroom ratios**, which have typically been **18-19 students per teacher**, improving to **16.8** in 2024/25. These figures better reflect the classroom experience that families and staff see locally.

Sources: Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning; PCSD

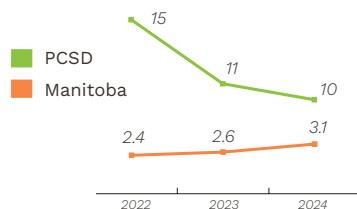
## Homeschool Enrollment Trends

In September 2024, **110 students** living in the Pine Creek School Division (PCSD) catchment area were home-schooled, representing about **2% of Manitoba's total home-schooled students**.

The chart below shows the number of home-schooled students per 100 students enrolled in schools. For instance, in 2022, for every 100 students enrolled in PCSD schools, there were **15** home-schooled students. This fell to **10** in 2024, while Manitoba overall increased from **2.4** to **3.1** during the same period.

### Homeschool Students

per 100 Enrolled Students



Note: Manitoba numbers include public school divisions and First Nations schools under educational agreements.

Source: PCSD, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

## Assiniboine College Rural Rotating Site

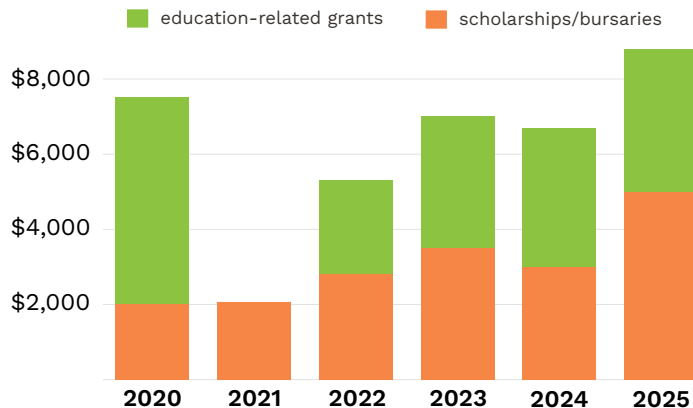
While Assiniboine College has permanent sites, its rural rotating campuses give learners in the province a chance to take the two-year Practical Nursing program closer to home. The program rotates throughout the province every two years, with the next intake for Neepawa in January 2027. **25** seats are available in this full-time course.

Source: Assiniboine College

“Online courses help, but they don’t work for every student. Some kids thrive, others fall behind.”

## Scholarships and Education Grants

The Big Grass Community Foundation has awarded more than **\$37,000** in scholarships and education-related grants since 2020. Annual support has ranged from just over **\$2,000** in 2021 to nearly **\$8,800** in 2025, reflecting the foundation’s growing investment in students and community learning. These totals include both direct scholarships/bursaries and education-related grants such as support for preschools, day cares, school groups and parent advisory councils.



Source: Big Grass Community Foundation

## Youth Perspectives on Education

In the 2025 survey of local Grades 10–12 students, about **67%** of respondents said school is at least probably preparing them well for life, and **over half** plan to attend university, with **59%** already saving for post-secondary education. At the same time, students called for more diverse classes, from life skills and trades like taxes, budgeting, agriculture, and wood shop to arts such as dance and fashion design, AP classes, and cultural language courses beyond French.

Source: 2025 Youth Survey

## Community Insight

In the focus groups, participants described education as both a priority and a challenge in WestLake-Gladstone. Concerns were raised about the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers. Frequent turnover was seen as disrupting stability and leading to the loss of trusted, experienced staff. Parents questioned whether students are leaving high school with the skills they need for the future and worried that young people who struggle, or those affected by bullying, do not always get the support they require.

At the same time, participants pointed to reasons for hope and opportunities to act. They noted that graduation rates have improved and that local adult programs, such as those offered through GASSP, are valuable and accessible. Residents saw potential in expanding digital literacy training, evening classes, and post-secondary programs in areas such as nursing or trades. They felt that investing in schools, early learning, and lifelong education would create stronger opportunities for all ages and help the community build on its strengths.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



- Their satisfaction with their level of education
- The possibility of good options for distance and online learning courses

They were least positive about:




- Personal interest opportunities (e.g., art classes, hobby groups, or personal development courses)
- Flexible or part-time learning options for adults



# Environment

Reflects care for nature, community spaces and natural resources, and includes resource conservation, waste management and readiness for environmental challenges.



 **key indicator score:** **3.4**  
80%

 **community satisfaction score:** **3.4**  
20%

## Soil Conservation and Carbon Storage

In 2021, **74%** of farmland in WestLake-Gladstone used conservation tillage practices, up from **51%** in 2016. This increase demonstrates a significant shift toward soil conservation in the region. For comparison, 71% of Manitoba farmland used conservation tillage methods in 2021.

### Conservation Tillage Practices

% of land area seeded, 2021

■ zero tillage   
 ■ minimum tillage   
 ■ conventional tillage



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0367-01

Conservation tillage is a farming technique that minimizes soil disturbance and leaves more plant material on the soil surface, helping to maintain soil health and moisture. It also stores carbon in the soil and makes farmland more sustainable and resilient to drought.

## DID YOU KNOW?

For every cart emptied with the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone curbside recycling program, the municipality will make a donation to a local charity?

Source: Municipality of Westlake-Gladstone website

## Watershed Districts

Most of WestLake-Gladstone is part of the Whitemud Watershed District, with members on six sub-districts. Whitemud manages both infrastructure and conservation programs.

In 2024, the municipality also joined the Westlake Watershed District, which covers the Lakeland area that was previously outside any watershed district. This expansion does not include infrastructure but allows landowners to access conservation programs such as the GROW program, shelterbelt planting, well-sealing, and ring dykes.

Source: Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone

## Big Grass Marsh

Big Grass Marsh is a **12,400-acre (5,000 ha)** wetland complex recognized internationally as an Important Bird Area for its role in supporting large concentrations of migratory waterfowl. It remains one of North America's key staging and moulting grounds for ducks, geese, and other species moving across the continent.



Big Grass Marsh also has national heritage value: in 1938, it became **Ducks Unlimited Canada's first wetland restoration project**, a legacy that continues to shape conservation in Canada today.

Sources: Important Bird Areas Canada; Ducks Unlimited Canada

*"Farmers are environmentally conscious — they care about soil and water because it's their livelihood."*

## Emergency Preparedness

Local emergency contacts and additional resources, including links to the Province of Manitoba's Emergency Management Organization (EMO), are available on the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone's website.

The municipality encourages households to keep at least **14 days of emergency supplies** on hand in case they are unable to leave home. A handy supplies fact sheet is available on the municipal website, and residents are also encouraged to sign up for Connect communications.

Source: [www.westlake-gladstone.ca/p/emergency-services](http://www.westlake-gladstone.ca/p/emergency-services)

Approximately **70%** of survey respondents report knowing little or nothing about local plans and resources for environmental emergencies such as flooding, tornadoes, drought, and heatwaves. However, **60%** believe the community is at least moderately prepared to handle these emergencies, suggesting room for both increased awareness and preparedness.

Source: 2025 Community Survey

*"Recycling works, but it could be more accessible. Not everyone has the bins or knows what goes where."*

## Connect Registration

The latest news, upcoming events, emergency alert messages from Canada's national emergency alerting system (Alert Ready), and weather for WestLake-Gladstone are all sent to community members via text, email and phone through the Connect system. Approximately **830** people have signed up for Connect, including:

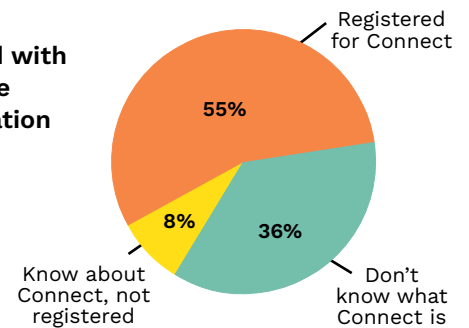
- Text - **510**
- Email - **347**
- Phone - **412**

Registrations have gone up over the past year and continues to rise as people talk about how they received the notifications. Posters are still being used to notify people without access to technology.

Source: Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone, 2025

**Are you registered with Connect to receive municipal information and alerts about infrastructure or emergencies?**

Source: 2025 Community Survey



## Community Insight

In the focus groups, participants described the environment in terms of everyday experiences. People noted frustrations with garbage and composting, mentioning overflowing bins and the lack of a community compost site. Concerns were also raised about air quality, linked to burning practices and idling trucks, as well as about water quality in some areas. Participants also wondered whether the community is fully prepared for emergencies such as floods, tornados, or train accidents, and said clearer communication would help residents feel more confident.

Alongside these concerns, residents also pointed to sources of hope. Trails and outdoor spaces are well used and appreciated, and many felt that maintaining and expanding them would strengthen quality of life. Big Grass Marsh, Lake Manitoba, and the Whitemud River were seen as important natural assets, worth protecting and better maintaining. A participant suggested creating opportunities for newcomers and others to learn from ranchers and knowledgeable locals about the land, plants, animals, and habitats. They felt that sharing this knowledge could build a deeper appreciation of the environment and encourage more people to care for it.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Community places to enjoy nature
2. Air quality
3. Water quality

They were least positive about:

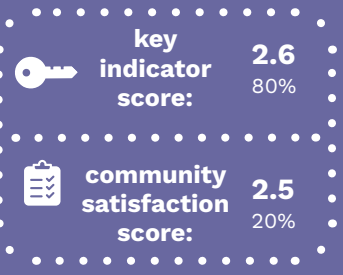


1. How walking paths and sidewalks connect areas of the community
2. Gardening opportunities
3. Tree planting and maintenance



# Health & Wellness

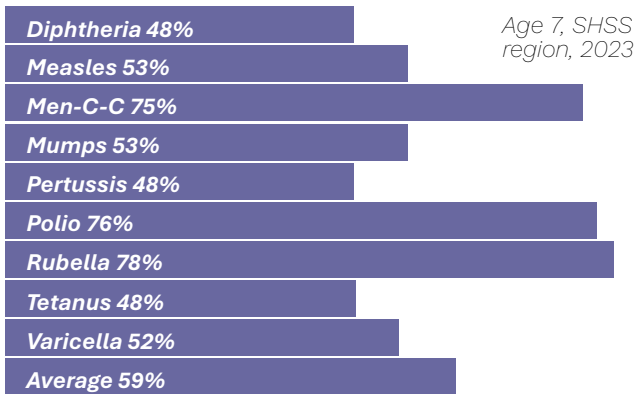
Reflects the physical and mental health of community members and aspects of the local health care system, including access to health care, home care and long-term care.



## 🔑 Childhood Immunization Rate

The Childhood Immunization Rate measures the average percentage of children immunized by age seven for nine critical childhood diseases. In 2023, the average immunization coverage in SHSS region was **59%** across vaccines, which falls below the provincial average of **69%** and the highest regional rate of **76%** in Prairie Mountain Health. Rates can also vary significantly from community to community within a large health region like SHSS. SHSS' average immunization rate dropped slightly from **71%** in 2017.

In 2023, only **53%** of seven-year-olds in SHSS had been fully immunized for measles, a highly contagious and vaccine-preventable illness.



Source: Manitoba Health - Report of Immunization Surveillance

## 🔑 Perceived Mental & Overall Health

According to Statistics Canada (2020), **67%** of SHSS residents rated their mental health as “very good” or “excellent,” compared to **63%** provincially. For overall health, **59%** rated their health positively, just below Manitoba’s **60%**. Both measures have declined slightly since 2018.

Sources: Statistics Canada

## 🔑 Family Physicians per 100,000 Population

In 2023, the Southern Health–Santé Sud (SHSS) region had **83 family physicians per 100,000 people**, down 2% since 2019. By comparison, Manitoba had **107** and Canada **120** per 100,000.

Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information

### Access to Medical Care

**Primary Care:** In the 2025 Community Survey, **85%** of respondents reported having a family doctor or primary care provider.



Of those, **33%** said their provider is in Neepawa, **25%** in Gladstone, and **19%** in Portage la Prairie. **6%** travel to Brandon or Winnipeg, while about **17%** did not specify a location.

**Virtual Visits:** Alongside in-person visits, virtual care is now common: **44%** of survey respondents had an online or phone appointment with their doctor or clinic in the past year, **37%** saw a specialist virtually, and **13%** used a platform such as QDoc.

Source: 2025 Community Survey

### Teen Clinic and Youth Supports

In the 2025 youth survey, about **one-third** of high school students rated the quality and access of teen health services, including the Teen Clinic, as good, while many were neutral. Only a small share reported using helplines or counselling services in the past year, and several students noted they had never used or even heard of the Teen Clinic. Suggestions for improvement included offering more hours, raising awareness, and making services easier to access.

*“There’s a lot of people who are not getting the home care they need because they don’t have enough workers.”*

*“Need more RNs, LPNs, and care staff in the care home to reduce reliance on agency workers.”*

## Senior Support Programs

The Gladstone Area Senior Support Program Inc. (GASSP) offers a wide range of programming, including physical activities (exercise, yoga), social opportunities (coffee gatherings, plant exchanges, friendly visiting), intergenerational activities, and learning sessions. They also provide referrals, advocacy, form filling, mobility equipment loans and assistance, foot care, home assessments, transportation through a volunteer program, and coordination of the Handi-Van. On average, **20 to 30** clients take part each day.

The Plumas Seniors Support Program provides supports for older adults, including social activities, Victoria Lifelines, equipment rentals, and more.

Source: GASSP; Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone website

*“I don’t yet need long-term care myself, but when I tried to help an older person access resources it took almost a month. There just aren’t enough people working to make the transition smooth, and if someone doctors outside the community the process is even more challenging.”*

## Home Care Clients

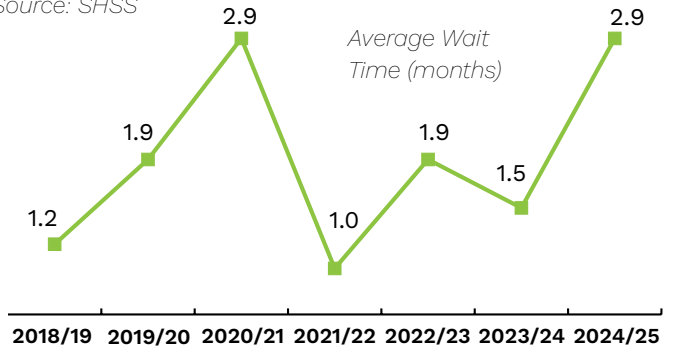
In 2023/24, **33 clients** in WestLake-Gladstone received home care, a **23% decrease** from 2018/19. Numbers peaked at **51 clients in 2021/22**, before steadily declining.

Source: SHSS

## Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities

Third Crossing Manor, the primary long-term care facility in Gladstone, has **50 beds**. In 2024/25, the average wait time rose to **2.9 months**, about a month longer than in 2019/20. After peaking in 2021/22, admissions have since leveled off, ranging from **15 to 20 residents** annually.

Source: SHSS



## Community Insight

Participants highlighted attracting and retaining more family doctors, nurses, health care aides, and other health professionals such as physiotherapists as the most important step toward improving health and wellness. They also emphasized the need for more care home spaces and stronger home care supports, so seniors can remain in their community as they age. Residents noted that navigating the system for older relatives can take weeks and that staffing shortages make transitions to home care or long-term care difficult. Improvements to ambulance response times and better transportation options, including Handi-Van services for those who must travel for specialized care, were also seen as priorities.

Beyond clinical services, participants pointed to opportunities that support healthy living. Local fitness and nutrition programs and more intergenerational activities were suggested as ways to improve well-being. Reducing stigma around mental health and addictions was also viewed as essential, so people feel safe seeking help when they need it. Building on the strong base of recreation programs was seen as another way to strengthen health and wellness across all age groups.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Quality of primary care
2. Access to lab and x-ray services

They were least positive about:



1. Access to medical care, particularly during evenings and weekends
2. Other health services available in the community (e.g. physiotherapy, massage, podiatry, optometry)



# Culture & Belonging

Recognizing the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Building a close-knit and welcoming community through events, activities celebrating culture, identity and faith, and public spaces that make everyone feel like they belong.



key indicator score: **3.1** 80%

community satisfaction score: **4.1** 20%

## Sense of Belonging

A strong sense of belonging is important for personal well-being and the overall health of a community. People who feel connected are more likely to volunteer, participate in civic life, and support local initiatives.

**"I feel like I belong here in our community"**



**71% of adults** surveyed agreed

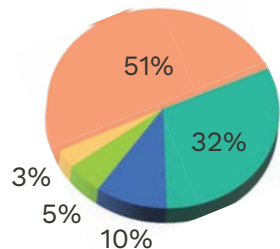


**51% of youth** (Grades 10–12) agreed

In WestLake-Gladstone, most community survey takers said they can be themselves in public places. **86%** said they are treated fairly in the community, and about **70%** said they feel comfortable being open about their culture, identity, and beliefs. Just over half, **51%**, said there are enough activities to support their cultural and spiritual needs.

Source: 2025 Community Survey

## Participation in Cultural, Faith and Community Groups



Are you an active member of a local cultural, faith or community group? How often do you participate?

- Not active in a group
- 10+ times a year
- 3-10 times per year
- 1-2 times a year
- Not currently a member, but interested

Source: 2025 Community Survey

*"As far as belonging, it is difficult to 'fit in' if you are new to the area."*

## Experiences of Discrimination



In the 2025 Community Survey of adults, **11%** reported that they or a dependent experienced discrimination in the past year. Reported reasons included race or visible minority status, Indigenous identity, gender, sexual orientation, language barriers, disability, and being a newcomer or not born in the community.



In the Youth Survey, **20%** of Grade 10–12 students said they had personally experienced discrimination in their community. The most common reasons given were visible minority status, 2SLGBTQIA+ identity, Indigenous identity, and gender.

Source: 2025 Community Survey, 2025 Youth Survey

## Local Social Connections

- **7 in 10** residents have close friends in the community
- **2 in 3** have family members living nearby
- **1 in 2** have other personal connections
- **1 in 4** would like to have more friends

*"Since COVID, some people stayed isolated. We need better communication — a newsletter, bulletin boards — so everyone knows what's going on."*

## Local Political Representation

Balanced political representation is important for including diverse perspectives in decision-making.

In 2025, **29%** of the municipal representatives for WestLake-Gladstone were women. In 2023, women represented **31%** of municipal elected officials in Canada and **20%** in Manitoba.

Jodie Byram represents Agassiz in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, while nationally, Dan Mazer is the Member of Parliament for Riding Mountain.

Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2023



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Big Grass Community Foundation grants supported restoration work at the Westbourne Cemetery, where headstones were cleaned and levelled. The project honours local history, provides dignity for families, and helps preserve an important gathering place for future generations.

## School Nutrition Programs

Students attending four schools in WestLake-Gladstone (Gladstone Elementary, Langruth Elementary, Plumas Elementary, and William Morton Collegiate) benefit from meal and snack programs supported by the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba.



*"The Breakfast Club is a big deal. No one feels singled out, and every kid gets a meal to start the day, helping them take part in school activities on an equal footing."*

## Community Insight

Community members described WestLake-Gladstone as a place with strong personal ties and supportive networks. What gave them hope was the way neighbours step up for one another, through volunteering, community events, and the sense that people try to include everyone. Programs like the Breakfast Club at schools were seen as powerful examples of how inclusion can happen without stigma, giving every child a fair start to the day.

At the same time, participants in community engagements acknowledged challenges. Some felt it can be difficult for newcomers to break into established circles, with a few saying that if you weren't born in the community, you might feel left out. While there were positive calls for more cultural sharing, others reflected on the need to address lingering misunderstandings and biases. These reflections point to the importance of creating safe spaces and events where diverse experiences are heard and valued.

Residents pointed to opportunities to build on the strengths already in place by expanding welcoming initiatives, creating more intentional spaces for cultural exchange, and fostering inclusive events where long-time residents, newcomers, and youth can all connect. For many, the hope lies in scaling up the kinds of everyday practices that already work well: meeting people where they are, removing barriers to participation, and strengthening a culture of openness.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Community support
2. Self-expression
3. Friendly environment

They were least positive about:

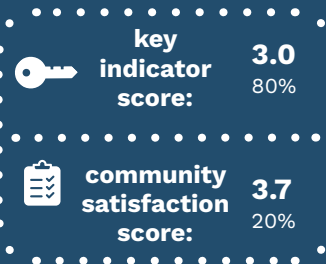


1. Local activities to support cultural and spiritual needs
2. Ease of meeting new people and making friends



# Arts & Recreation

Opportunities for participation in arts, leisure and sports activities including shows, events, clubs and recreational facilities.

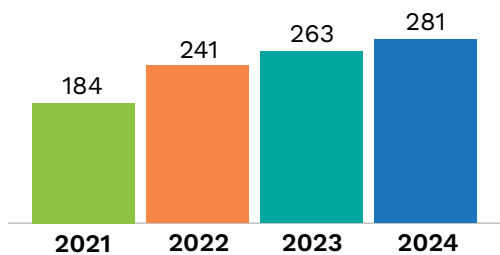


*“We’ve got good facilities — rinks, gyms, halls — but programs live or die by turnout. It’s discouraging when only a couple show up.”*

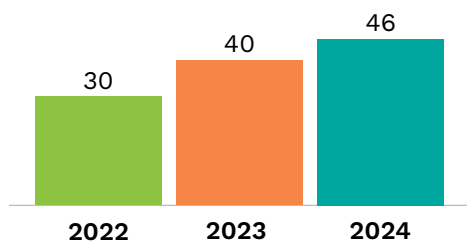
## Recreation Participation

Opportunities for participation in arts, leisure, and sports are important to community life. Survey takers described arenas, the pool, and halls as important gathering spaces, with events like the Fair strengthening community pride.

### Aquatic Centre Swim Lesson Participation



### Day Camp Registrations (yearly)

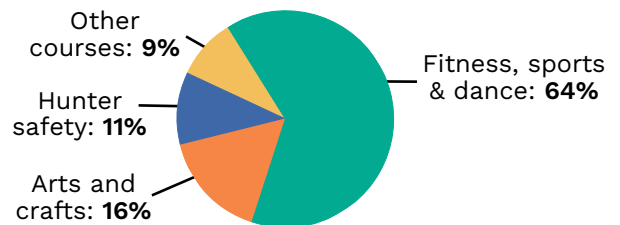


*“Camps help keep children active and engaged in the summer months.”*

## Recreation and Leisure Programs

From 2023 to May 2025, there were **233** enrollments across local recreation and leisure programs. Most were in fitness, sports, and dance, with additional participation in arts and crafts, hunter safety, and short courses such as babysitting, first aid, and food handling.

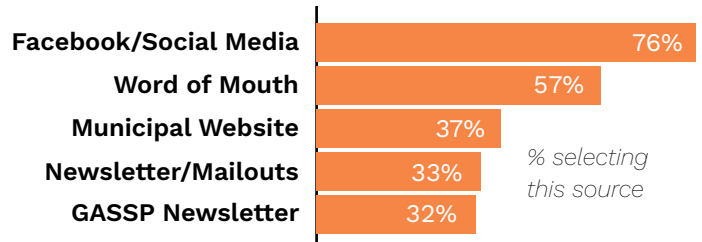
Enrollments (2023–May 2025)



Source: Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone Recreation and Leisure Programs

## Recreation and Leisure Programs

According to the 2025 community survey, the top sources of information for Arts & Recreation were:



When asked how they would like to receive information in the future, survey participants called for more posters, mailouts, and email lists, alongside continued use of social media.

Source: 2025 Community Survey

## Library Use

Branch Circulation (physical materials only)



Library	2023	2024
Gladstone	4,695	5,073
Langruth	652	525

Source: Parkland Regional Library 2024 Annual Report

*“The library isn’t just about books — it’s where families and seniors connect.”*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Big Grass Community Foundation has supported the Westbourne Longburn Community Club with grants towards a new play structure, curling hacks, and ice cameras. The play structure brings families together, curling upgrades support the community’s most popular winter sport, and new technology makes the season more enjoyable for seniors and spectators.



## Differing Perspectives

When asked how satisfied they were across all eight domains of well-being, a gap emerged between adult and youth survey takers. Adults ranked **Arts & Recreation 3rd of 8**, while Grade 10–12 students ranked this domain as the least satisfying, **8th of 8**. This highlights a difference in how younger residents experience opportunities for recreation in the community.

Source: 2025 Community Survey, 2025 Youth Survey

*“Sports are strong here, but if you’re not into sports, the options for teens are limited.”*

## Barriers to Youth Participation

In the 2025 Youth Survey, Grade 10 to 12 students reported missing or choosing not to participate in a sports activity, club, or event over the past two years for various reasons. The most common reasons included:

I felt like I didn’t belong	<b>28%</b>
I did not know it was happening	<b>25%</b>
It was too expensive	<b>23%</b>
Same time as another activity	<b>23%</b>
No way to get there or to get home afterwards	<b>11%</b>
<b>I haven’t had to miss out on anything</b>	<b>32%</b>

Source: 2025 Youth Survey

## Community Insight

In the focus groups, residents described arenas, the pool, and other shared spaces as central gathering places that people rely on year after year. These facilities are well used, but many programs depend on the same small group of volunteers, creating concerns about burnout. Families said sports are well supported, yet there are too few options for very young children and for teens who are not interested in sports. Seniors emphasized the importance of affordable, accessible activities and the role of leaders who keep programs running.

Turnout was raised as another challenge. Some programs fill quickly, while others struggle to attract participants. Participants also highlighted the need for clearer communication, including a central calendar, more consistent promotion, and easier registration to make programs easier to find. Residents stressed that strong facilities, proven programs, and committed leaders provide a solid base to expand arts and recreation opportunities in the future.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Activities and programs (and the required equipment) are affordable for the family.
2. It’s easy to register for classes, sports leagues and programs offered in the community.

They were least positive about:




1. There are enough arts and recreation opportunities for me in the cold months.
2. Childcare is available when needed so parents can attend or participate in arts and recreation activities.




# Civic & Democratic Engagement

Involvement in democratic processes, government responsiveness and generosity with charitable giving and volunteering.



 **key indicator score:** **3.5**  
80%

 **community satisfaction score:** **2.7**  
20%

## Volunteering Activity

**60%** of survey respondents reported volunteering with a charitable organization, **18%** volunteered as a local instructor or coach, and **46%** sat on a local board or committee in the prior 2 years. By comparison, **49%** of Manitobans and **41%** of Canadians reported volunteering in 2018.

Source: 2025 Community Survey, Statistics Canada



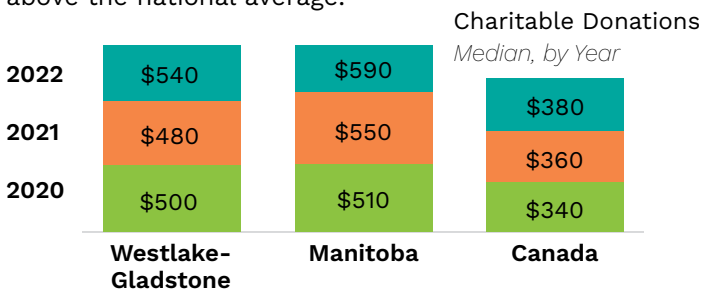
**71%**

of local survey respondents plan to **volunteer** in the coming year

Source: 2025 Community Survey

## Charitable Donations

Residents of WestLake–Gladstone report a strong culture of giving. In 2022, the median charitable donation in the municipality was **\$540**, slightly below the Manitoba median (**\$590**) but well above the Canadian amount (**\$380**). Giving levels increased by 8% since 2020, with WestLake–Gladstone consistently above the national average.



Source: Statistics Canada - T1 Family File Reference 25016 – 1187557



**22%**

of WestLake–Gladstone tax filers made a **charitable donation** in 2022

Source: Statistics Canada - T1 Family File



“We need greater participation by younger members of the community as volunteers to keep many of our projects going. I would encourage any newly-retired folks to offer their help as a volunteer as well as anyone looking for friendship and a sense of belonging.”

*“Turnout at events is mixed — sometimes people rally, other times there’s apathy. It depends on how it’s communicated.”*

## 🔑 Voter Turnout

Voter turnout is a key indicator of civic engagement and reflects the health of a democracy.

Higher turnout suggests that residents feel empowered to influence decisions that affect their community, while lower turnout can point to disengagement or barriers to participation.



**53% voter turnout in Agassiz (2023)**

**Provincial elections** (Agassiz): In the 2023 provincial election, **53%** of eligible voters in Agassiz cast a ballot, slightly below the Manitoba average of **55%**. Agassiz riding turnout was slightly higher in 2019 at **56%**.

**Federal elections** (Riding Mountain): In the 2021 federal election, **61%** of Riding Mountain residents voted, compared to **63%** across Manitoba and 63% nationally. In 2019, turnout was stronger at **65%**, again closely mirroring provincial and national patterns. Turnout figures for the 2025 federal election were not available at the time of writing.

Overall, local voter turnout has been consistent with wider Manitoba and Canadian averages, though the small decline since 2019 shows room to encourage stronger participation in future elections.

*Source: Elections Manitoba; Elections Canada*

## Participation in Civic & Democratic Activities

Engagement is important for community well-being as it empowers residents to influence decisions, hold leaders accountable, and ensure diverse voices guide the future. Without active participation, people may miss the chance to contribute to local issues and be part of key conversations shaping their community.

2025 Community Survey respondents reported various ways they engaged and participated in the past year:

- **46%** Sat on a board or a committee
- **34%** Wrote to or spoke with a municipal official about a local issue
- **24%** Attended a community planning meeting/open house
- **19%** Joined social media discussion on a local issue
- **18%** Watched a local council event on WCG TV
- **17%** Wrote to or spoke with a provincial or federal official
- **12%** Attended a municipal council meeting

*Source: 2025 Community Survey*

*“Council is approachable, but if you’re not online you miss updates. We need information in more places.”*

## Community Insight

Participants described WestLake-Gladstone as a place where people step up for one another, especially when the community is in need. What gave many residents hope was seeing the strong base of generosity and volunteerism, from fundraising to supporting local events. They noted that this culture of giving is a strength the community can continue to build on.

At the same time, concerns were raised about the heavy reliance on a small group of committed volunteers, with burnout becoming a real risk. Residents emphasized the importance of bringing in younger people, newly retired individuals, and newcomers to help share the load. Another theme was communication: those who are not active online often miss important council updates or opportunities to engage. More consistent newsletters, posters, or mailed updates were suggested as ways to ensure everyone feels informed and able to take part.

Community survey takers in WestLake-Gladstone were most positive about:



1. Future plans to volunteer
2. Future plans to donate to a local charity

They were least positive about:



1. Feeling well-informed about local government projects
2. Potential volunteer burnout

# Youth Survey Results

## Personal Safety and Emotional Support

Nearly **90%** of respondents feel safe at home, and **87%** report having people who care about them. These findings underscore the home as a vital source of stability and connection, even as broader community trust and belonging remain more mixed.

## Working Life

Just over **21%** of respondents reported having no work experience, while an equal percentage work part-time year-round and others engage in seasonal or occasional employment. Common reasons for working include saving for university, earning spending money and having something to do. However, barriers such as limited job opportunities, transportation challenges and small-town hiring constraints often stand in the way of those eager to work.

## Health and Mental Health

Nearly **80%** of youth rate their physical health as “Good” or “Very Good.” However, mental health presents a concern: **44%** rated their mental wellness as neutral or poor, and only **15%** accessed counseling services or help lines in the past year. Teens offered suggestions to improve support, including making services more engaging, incorporating interactive health education and handling family involvement with care—highlighting a desire for emotionally intelligent, stigma-free resources.

## Life Skills

Students expressed mixed feelings about how well school prepares them for life. While academic preparation is generally seen as adequate, many feel underprepared for real-world responsibilities like managing finances or living independently. Suggestions for improvement include more practical classes—home economics, agriculture, coding and emergency services. Some suggested expanded language and career-specific offerings.

## Transportation Barriers for Youth

**1 in 3** students reported that a lack of transportation had prevented them from participating in activities in the prior month. The most common activities missed due to lack of transportation were sports (**13%**), school, medical appointments, or after-school programs (**9%** each), and in a few cases, club meetings or work (**2%**).

While the majority of students were able to take part in their regular activities, these results highlight how transportation gaps can still prevent some youth from fully participating in school and community life. Students living outside of Gladstone were about **3** times more likely to report missing out on activities due to transportation compared to their peers living in town.

## Opportunities for Programming

Teens express a clear appetite for more inclusive and diverse programming. Badminton, volleyball, swimming and academic clubs top the list of desired activities, alongside creative outlets like theatre, photography and other activities such as fencing and gaming.

## Looking to the Future

Only **17%** of youth surveyed expect to remain in the area long-term, with many planning to leave for broader opportunities. Educational goals are ambitious, with many aiming for university and advanced degrees, while others plan to pursue trades, military service or personal passions like farming and athletics. Career goals and personal aspirations play a major role in shaping these choices.

## 2025 YOUTH SURVEY PARTICIPATION

(Grades 10–12, William Morton Collegiate)

- **58 responses** (over 40% of Grade 10–12 enrollment)
- **Survey length:** 39 questions
- **Delivery:** Offered online only, early 2025
- **Notes:** Participation was voluntary, with prizes raffled off to respondents

### Demographics

- **Grade:** 33% Grade 10, 48% Grade 11, 19% Grade 12
- **Where students live:** 57% in Gladstone, 12% on nearby farms/acreages, 7% near Plumas, 7% near Langruth, 3% near Westbourne, 9% other (e.g., Sandy Bay, Glenella, Neepawa, Keyes)
- **Gender:** 61% women, 39% men
- **Indigenous identity:** 16% Indigenous, 84% non-Indigenous
- **Racialized identity:** 44% racialized group, 55% non-racialized
- **2SLGBTQIA+ identity:** 5% yes, 79% no, 16% preferred not to say
- **Living with a disability:** 11% yes, 86% no, 4% preferred not to say
- **Language(s) at home:** 83% English, 34% another language (Tagalog, Ilocano, Bisaya, Ojibwe, Chinese, German, Russian, Bosnian, Serbian, etc.)



# Methodology & Sources

## Primary Data Collection

The primary data for this report was collected through multiple community engagement events community surveys. These include:

- **Community Conversation:** An initial community conversation with local leaders that introduced the Vital Signs project and gathered initial qualitative insights into priority domains and pressing issues.
- **Roundtable Discussions:** A focused workshop with community members across sectors such as education, health, business and local government, aimed at identifying key local issues and attributes. Affinity mapping and voting were used to organize responses.
- **Community Surveys:** See below
- **Reflection Sessions:** After analysing the data and survey results, we hosted two focus groups with residents to discuss preliminary findings and to gather feedback. These sessions encouraged open dialogue about local concerns and aspirations.
- **Survey Representativeness:** The surveys provide a meaningful snapshot of community perspectives, with good coverage across age groups, genders, and communities in WestLake-Gladstone. The adult survey captured **7–8% of the local adult population**, which is a strong response rate for a long voluntary community survey. The youth survey captured over **40%** of students in Grades 10–12; however, participation was voluntary and self-selected.

Some people, such as those in lower-income households, newcomers, or those with limited internet be underrepresented. The results should therefore be understood as broadly indicative rather than fully representative of the entire population.

## Secondary Data

The secondary data used in this report comes from a range of reliable sources, including:

- **Statistics Canada:** Census data from 2021, as well as updates on key economic, social, and demographic indicators, provided a foundation for understanding long-term trends in the region.
- **Local Service Providers:** Data on service usage and community needs were provided by local organizations and governments. These sources contributed valuable localized data on issues such as child care, recreation, local services and city amenities.

## Grade Scores

Each domain is scored on a scale from 1 (F) to 5 (A+), based on:

- **80%: Key indicator scores**, evaluated against provincial or national benchmarks, and adjusted for recent trends. Improving key indicators are adjusted up to one point upwards, and deteriorating key indicators are adjusted up to one point downwards.
- **20%: 2025 Community Survey satisfaction scores** (values are curved and normalized)

## Acknowledging the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

We would like to acknowledge Dr. Bryan Smale, creator of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), along with the many collaborators who contributed to its development. Housed at the University of Waterloo, the CIW was developed through extensive collaboration with experts across various fields, ensuring a robust, comprehensive and credible framework for measuring well-being in a Canadian context. In 2023, Manitoba Blue Cross published *How Are Manitobans Really Doing? A Report Based on the Canadian Index of Wellbeing*, written by Dr. Smale and Dr. Gao, which applies the CIW framework to Manitoba. The well-being framework used in this Vital Signs project builds upon that work, particularly its balanced approach to looking at community well-being across eight inter-connected areas, ensuring that no single aspect of community life is viewed in isolation.

## 2025 COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPATION

### Adult Community Survey (ages 18+)

- **185 total responses:** 145 complete, 40 partial
- **Survey length:** 89 questions
- **Delivery:** Offered online and on paper in early 2025

### Where respondents live

- Gladstone **48%**, Lakeland **1%**, Langruth **5%**, Plumus **10%**, Westbourne **3%**, other parts of WestLake-Gladstone **33%**

### Demographics

- **Gender:** 70% women, 26% men, 1% non-binary, 3% preferred not to say
- **Age:** 23% ages 18–39, 22% ages 40–54, 20% ages 55–64, 25% ages 65–74, 10% ages 75+
- **Indigenous identity:** 5% Indigenous, 93% non-Indigenous, 2% preferred not to say
- **Racialized identity:** 3% racialized group, 90% non-racialized, 7% preferred not to say
- **Living with a disability:** 20% yes, 75% no, 5% preferred not to say
- **Length of residency:** 21% less than 10 years, 18% 10–24 years, 61% 25+ years
- **Born in Canada:** 94% born in Canada, 6% born outside Canada
- **Household income:** 25% \$0–40,000; 17% \$40–60,000; 11% \$60–80,000; 12% \$80–100,000; 16% \$100–150,000; 9% \$150,000+; 10% preferred not to say
- **Education:** 3% no certificate; 23% high school; 40% college/trade/technical; 26% university degree; 4% other; 3% preferred not to say



# Local Voices

## What are the best things about the WestLake-Gladstone area?

Community survey respondents were asked to pick up to five options.

1. Friends & family	55%
2. Pace of life	53%
3. Affordability	46%
4. Feeling of safety	43%
5. The people	34%
6. Natural environment	30%
7. Sense of community	30%
8. Walkability	28%
9. Recreation opportunities	24%
10. Air quality	20%

## What are the most important issues facing the WestLake-Gladstone area?

Community survey respondents were asked to pick up to five options.

1. Healthcare	71%
2. Employment	49%
3. Housing	48%
4. Local infrastructure	43%
5. Economy	37%
6. Cost of living	32%
7. Community planning/development	32%
8. Eldercare	29%
9. Transportation	16%
10. Child care	15%

# Why Does Data Matter in a Community?

In today's world, claims and "facts" are often thrown around casually, but finding reliable evidence to back them up is not always straightforward. This can lead to confusion or even division within a community. However, when a community relies on data, it creates a shared understanding that everyone can trust. One way to foster this unity is through this Vital Signs report – a report full of measurable indicators of a community's well-being. These are metrics that everyone can get behind. This shared knowledge helps build stronger connections among community members by providing a clear picture of what's actually happening. For example, tracking data on health, education, employment, or housing can reveal trends and challenges that may otherwise go unnoticed. By focusing on evidence-based insights, a community becomes more informed and better equipped to make decisions that benefit everyone, especially when viewed through an equity lens. This means ensuring that policies and actions promote fairness and support for all community members, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

## So, why should you care?

Because the truth matters. In a community where decisions are based on real data, political agendas are set aside, and the voices of citizens take center stage. This empowers individuals and leaders alike to take meaningful action. With accurate information, you can make choices that improve the quality of life for everyone in the community, driving positive change that is rooted in facts rather than assumptions.

# Ready to Make a Difference in Your Community?

At the heart of every thriving rural community is a network of people who care. That is what the Big Grass Community Foundation is all about, investing in the future of our region by supporting the programs, services, and spaces that make life better for everyone. Your community is not just where you live, it is where you belong. Whether you are a lifelong resident or new to the area, there is a role for you in building a stronger, more connected community.

Here are some ways to get started:



## Donate Today

The Big Grass Community Foundation builds a permanent pool of charitable funds that is never spent; instead, the income is used year after year to support local initiatives in youth, seniors, education, health, arts, environment, and community spaces. Your gift, large or small, helps neighbours thrive for generations to come.



## Volunteer Your Time

Your skills, energy, and enthusiasm are needed. Whether it is lending a hand at a local fundraiser, helping coach a kids' team, or serving on a board, there are many ways to give back.



## Support Local Life

Shop at local businesses, attend a hockey game, or take part in a town clean-up. Small actions build pride and keep our communities vibrant.



## Spread the Word

Know someone who has not heard of the Big Grass Community Foundation or other local initiatives? Share what you know. Every new connection builds momentum for local good.



## Start a Conversation

Talk to a neighbour, coworker, or friend. Building belonging starts with small, meaningful connections; you never know what spark might ignite.



## Show Up

Attend a community bonfire, open house, or community concert. Your presence matters; it is how we build trust, connection, and a sense of home.



## Get Involved at School

Young people can make a difference too. Join leadership groups, help with school fundraisers, play a role in 4-H or sports teams, take part in local clean-ups, or get involved in fairs. Small steps in school and youth programs can ripple into big changes for the whole community.

Every conversation, donation, and every act of kindness helps shape a stronger, more vibrant future for our community. Whether you are planting the seeds of change or nurturing long-standing traditions, your involvement matters. This is your chance to be part of something lasting, something that uplifts neighbours, strengthens connections, and creates opportunities for generations to come.



Visit [biggrasscommunityfoundation.ca](https://biggrasscommunityfoundation.ca) to discover ways to give, volunteer, partner, or simply learn more.

Let's turn good intentions into great outcomes. Let's build something special together!

## About The Big Grass Community Foundation (BGCF)

The Big Grass Community Foundation, Inc., was established and incorporated in 2004 as a non-profit, charitable organization, with a stated goal to build a pool of charitable funds to serve its respective community. The pool of funds is never spent, but the income from it is invested in local health, recreation, sports, education, environment and heritage projects, among others, to improve our quality of life. The foundation is run by local volunteers, without remuneration, for the benefit of our community.



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### With Gratitude to Our Community Partners

This Vital Signs report was made possible through the generous support of:

Manitoba Blue Cross

Gladstone Area Chamber of Commerce

Endow Manitoba

Neepawa-Gladstone Co-op

Westlake-Gladstone Municipality

*Thank you for your commitment to helping build stronger, healthier, and more connected communities across our region!*

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### Message from Manitoba Blue Cross

Manitoba Blue Cross is a trusted health and wellness partner for Manitobans. To assess and address wellbeing needs, we commissioned the first-ever Manitoba Index of Wellbeing, an extension of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (University of Waterloo). Released in June 2024, the report provides insights into quality of life from 1994 to 2020 and marks a key milestone in our wellness efforts. Through our partnership with Endow Manitoba, we remain committed to evidence-based, community-focused practices and to supporting meaningful change across the province.

