

Section 1

1. GET PERSONAL

The learning approaches and activities in **Section 1: Get Personal** encourage students to consider how their own communities set a context for decision-making and shared responsibilities. Students develop criteria for what an ideal community should provide, and identify privately owned as well as shared services and facilities. Students start to develop understandings of the relationship between local government, democracy and citizenship. Students consider the responsibilities involved in building a good quality of life within communities, how local government contributes and how issues involve shared decision-making.

This section introduces students to the concepts of municipalities and municipal government in Alberta and reinforces understandings of citizenship, rights and responsibilities in a democracy. Activities focus on the link between the broader concepts of citizenship and local government and set the context for further exploration of the structures and functions of municipal government in Section 2: A Good Place to Live.

Select, modify and adapt the activities that follow to best meet the needs of your students, reinforce what students have previously learned about the concept of community and introduce students to ways that local government is connected to community and participation.

Involvement in *Involvement in Communities* Communities

Preparing for Learning

This section asks students to work with the concepts of community, municipal government, decision-making and democracy. Students should have been introduced to the concepts of **democracy** and **representation**. A **democracy** is a political system in which citizens have a voice in decision-making. A **representative democracy** provides citizens with the ability to elect a representative to govern and make decisions on their behalf. Students should also have an understanding of the characteristics of urban and rural communities.

There are five critical issues in this section.

What is a community?
1 to 2 class periods*

What should and can a community provide?
4 to 5 class periods*

Why share?
1 to 3 class periods*

What does it mean to be a citizen?
2 to 3 class periods*

How democratic is our community?
2 to 4 class periods*

* Based on 50-minute class periods

WHAT YOU NEED

Student Resources

- Student Resource 1-1: Building Municipalities (pp. 45-48)
- Student Resource 1-2: Alberta Municipalities (pp. 49-54)
- Student Resource 1-3: Shared Spaces (pp. 55-56)
- Student Resource 1-4: Democracy and Local Government (pp. 57-58)

Graphic Organizers

- KWHL Chart (p. 200)
- T-Chart (p. 201)
- Clipboard (p. 203)
- Bubble Map (p. 204)
- Triple T-Chart (p. 202)
- Sphere of Influence Chart (p. 205)
- Multi-Flow Map (p. 206)

Materials and Sources

- Poster paper
- Mural paper
- Art supplies
- Local newspapers, magazines, brochures and pictures

Teacher Backgrounders

- Municipal Government in a Democracy (pp. 59-61)

This teacher backgrounder describes the concept of governance in municipalities. Governance in a municipality usually refers to the roles, responsibilities and activities of the municipal council. As the governing body of the municipal corporation, the council is the foundation of local democracy. However, the *Municipal Government Act*, the provincial legislation governing municipalities, provides that councils can only exercise the powers of the municipal corporation in the proper form, either by bylaw or by resolution.



THINK ABOUT

Local government in Alberta is municipal government. Municipalities are a type of local authority.

A First Nations reserve is not a part of any municipality. Through the *British North America Act (1867)*, the federal government has exclusive legislative authority on matters related to Aboriginal peoples and reserves.



* A Métis Settlement is a corporation under the *Métis Settlement Act* and provides services and governance like a local authority.

The council as a whole has specific roles to play, as does each elected representative. Some of these roles are legislated by the *Municipal Government Act*.

□ Municipalities in Alberta (pp. 62-66)

This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the types of municipal governments found in Alberta. Each type of municipality has unique characteristics. However, all are governed by the *Municipal Government Act*. The total number of different types of municipalities can change over time.

A municipality is an administrative entity composed of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it. Municipalities are often thought of as urban and rural. However, current municipalities in Alberta go beyond that understanding. Many municipalities have areas and influences that combine both urban and rural ways of life. The designation “rural” should not be interpreted to include only farm or resource-based areas. Some rural municipalities contain substantial residential populations.

This backgrounder provides information on:

- Cities
- Towns
- Villages
- Summer Villages
- Specialized Municipalities
- Municipal Districts.

It also provides information about improvement districts, special areas, and Métis Settlements, which are not municipalities.



LEARNING OUTCOMES AND INQUIRY

Section 1: Get Personal emphasizes the **Explore** and **Consider Perspectives** stages of the inquiry process. The five critical issues in this section include a performance assessment task.

Inquiry Steps and Processes	Questions that Guide the Inquiry	Critical Issues that Emphasize the Inquiry Focus
Explore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivate and generate interest Establish prior knowledge and experiences Identify concepts and understandings Make predictions 	Why is this important? What interests me about this issue or question? What do I already know? What do I think about this issue? How does this issue or question affect me? What do I need to understand about this issue?	What is a community? What should and can a community provide?
Consider Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify research questions Identify individuals and groups involved with the question or issue Consider different perspectives and opinions 	What questions do I have? Who is affected and why? What different opinions exist?	Why share? What does it mean to be a citizen? How democratic is our community?

Social Studies Learning Outcomes

General Outcome 6.1

Citizens Participating in Decision-Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

Local and Current Affairs

In order to allow opportunities for students to engage in current affairs, issues and concerns of a local nature, the program of studies provides the flexibility to include these topics within the time allotted for social studies.

Specific Learning Outcomes Supported and Developed in Section 1: Get Personal

Values and Attitudes

6.1.1 recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:

- (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)
- (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)

Knowledge and Understandings

6.1.2 demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (1) What is democracy? (C, PADM)
- (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)

6.1.4 analyze the structure and functions of local governments in Alberta by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (3) How are local governments structured differently in rural and urban settings? (PADM)

Skills and Processes

6.5.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- (1) assess significant local and current affairs from a variety of sources, with a focus on examining bias and distinguishing fact from opinion
- (2) critically evaluate ideas, information and positions
- (3) re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue
- (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities

6.5.3 develop skills of geographic thinking:

- (1) construct and interpret various types of maps to broaden understanding of topics being studied (i.e., historical, physical, political maps)

6.5.4 demonstrate skills of decision-making and problem solving:

- (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues
- (7) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem-solving environment

6.5.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:

- (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal

6.5.7 apply the research process:

- (1) determine reliability of information, filtering for point of view and bias
- (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process
- (3) use graphs, tables, charts and Venn diagrams to interpret information

6.5.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates
- (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form
- (5) listen to others in order to understand their perspectives
- (7) communicate effectively through appropriate forms, such as speeches, reports and multimedia presentations, applying information technologies that serve particular audiences and purposes

6.5.9 develop skills of media literacy:

- (1) detect bias present in the media
- (2) examine and assess diverse perspectives regarding an issue presented in the media

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Ongoing Assessment

Choices can be made about assessing student work in this section. The criteria checklist provided in this section can be used to:

- Observe student work in group and classroom settings
- Develop checklists for assessment of student work in the activities in this section.

Performance Assessment Task

The performance assessment task, *Participation Challenge – How democratic is our community?* involves students in a real-life scenario where they are asked to find evidence of democracy in action in their community, filter for bias and express their opinions. Students have choices in the way they communicate their information.

Criteria for Evaluation

Students provide evidence of their learning in this performance assessment task as they:

- provide evidence of democratic principles (6.1.2.1, 6.1.2.3, 6.S.8.2)
- evaluate sources of information (6.S.1.1, 6.S.7.1, 6.S.9.1)
- express and support opinions (6.S.1.3)
- communicate information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.8.7).



DIFFERENTIATE

Modifiable assessment tools are provided in Word format on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* teacher CD, as well as on the website.



Assessment Tip: Evaluating Differentiated Products

Invite students to identify the important features of the various means of communicating information. Each format will generate a slightly different list of criteria.

A good poster:

- States a clear message
- Uses legible lettering
- Supports the message with appropriate visuals
- Organizes information.

A good newspaper article:

- States a clear message
- Engages the reader with the lead sentence
- Organizes information
- Attends to conventions to support the reader in making meaning.

These criteria help students focus on what is important for their selected presentation format. These criteria are not graded individually; rather, they contribute to the overall impression of the message. As students pay attention to these criteria and improve their work in progress, their performance will be reflected in the rubric score for communicating information.

Students can use the *Checklist for Differentiated Products* provided in this section to record the criteria from their discussion and reflect on their work in progress. Items in the *Not Yet* category should be improved prior to handing in the assignment.



Assessment Tip: Using Checklists

The checklists included in each section of this resource provide a list of assessment criteria for the section that addresses outcomes from the Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies. Each criteria statement represents a cluster of outcomes and addresses all Values and Attitudes, Knowledge and Understandings and Skills and Process outcomes supported by the activities in each section. These checklists can be used to assess where students are at the beginning or end of the section. Assessing students at the beginning of the section provides support for making decisions about differentiating instruction or making choices about which activities will be used or how they should be modified. The checklist can be photocopied and placed in a folder for each student or can be used to assess students as they work in groups. Additional assessments can be added to the folder as the unit progresses and comments added to each student's checklist.

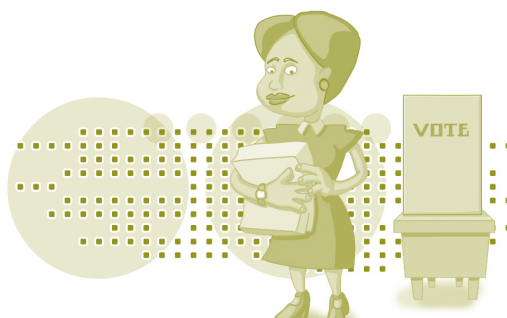
Section 1: Get Personal Checklist

Criteria Students provide evidence of their learning as they:	Yes	Almost	Not Yet
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1, 6.1.1.4, 6.S.8.5)			
Provide evidence of knowledge of democratic principles (6.1.2.1, 6.1.2.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Identify structure and functions of local government (6.1.4.3)			
Develop inquiry questions (6.S.7.2)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.1.1, 6.S.1.2, 6.S.7.1, 6.S.7.3, 6.S.9.1, 6.S.9.2)			
Discuss and share original ideas with others (6.S.1.4, 6.S.8.1)			
Express and support opinions (6.S.1.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.7)			
Use maps to provide evidence of understanding of municipal boundaries (6.S.3.1)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.8.7)			
Work collaboratively and cooperatively in a group setting (6.S.4.3, 6.S.5.2)			

Section 1: Get Personal
Checklist for Differentiated Products

What's important when using a _____ to communicate information?

Criteria for a good _____:	Does my work demonstrate the qualities of a good _____?		
	Yes	Not Yet	I know this because:
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			



Section 1: Get Personal

Rubric: Participation Challenge – How democratic is our community?

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
Identifies and shares evidence of democratic principles (6.1.2.1, 6.2.1.3, 6.5.8.2)	Identifies and shares pertinent and comprehensive evidence of democratic principles in own community.	Identifies and shares relevant and thorough evidence of democratic principles in own community.	Identifies and shares general and partial evidence of democratic principles in own community.	Identifies and shares vague and superficial evidence of democratic principles in own community.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
Evaluates sources of information (6.5.1.1, 6.5.7.1, 6.5.9.1)	Provides an insightful evaluation of sources.	Provides a thoughtful evaluation of sources.	Provides a basic evaluation of sources.	Provides an ineffective evaluation of sources.	
Expresses and supports opinion (6.5.1.3)	Provides compelling support for opinion.	Provides convincing support for opinion.	Provides simplistic support for opinion.	Provides trivial support for opinion.	
Communicates information (6.5.8.1, 6.5.8.7)	Communicates information in a memorable manner to engage the audience.	Communicates information in a purposeful manner to interest the audience.	Communicates information in a straightforward manner that generally holds the attention of the audience.	Communicates information in an ineffective manner that does little to sustain attention of the audience.	

* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

GLOSSARY

The following terms and concepts are developed in the activities and student resources of Section 1: Get Personal. Although they are grouped under the critical issue in which they are introduced, many recur and are used throughout the entire section. Definitions and explanations are presented in the context in which they appear in the teacher and student information.

Critical Issue 1: What is a community?

Community is defined as “a group of people with commonalities that may include culture, language, values and beliefs, interests, practices and ways of life, history and/or geographically defined shared space.”

Source: Kindergarten to Grade 3 Social Studies Program of Studies (2005): p. 6.

Most geographic communities in Alberta are governed by a **local government**, the level of government given the power to make decisions that relate to local issues and services. Local government is also called **municipal government**. Municipal government is a type of local government that is created by the provinces to provide services.

There are different types of **municipalities**. Each has similar structures and functions and may deal with similar or different issues. Municipalities are administrative entities comprised of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it.

Cities, towns, villages and summer villages are examples of municipalities.

Municipal districts are also municipalities and may include many different landscapes – rural areas and farmland, forested areas, mountains and parkland. Municipal districts can also be called **counties**, and can include smaller communities such as hamlets or **country residential subdivisions**, areas in which people build houses to live.

Examples of **local authorities** are municipal authorities (municipalities, improvement districts and special areas), regional health authorities, regional services commissions and boards of trustees of a district or division as defined in the *School Act*.

The provincial government also governs and manages **improvement districts** and **special areas**. Improvement districts are a form of local authority that is governed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs (who in the case of Kananaskis Improvement District delegates authority to the Minister of Environment). The Minister may form an advisory council to advise on local affairs. The purpose of a special area is to provide administration of Crown land and came about when the province took ownership of large areas of land resulting from unpaid taxes during the Depression.

Critical Issue 2: What should and can a community provide?

Something that is **viable** has the ability to grow and develop.

The **municipal council** is a group of people who are elected to represent the municipality.

The **council** refers to people who are **elected officials** responsible for representing the interests of their **constituents**, including the people who have the ability to elect them and who live in the area they represent.

Council is given the **authority**, or the power, to speak and make decisions for their constituents in council meetings.

Local authorities are areas in Alberta that provide local government. A municipality is considered to be a local authority. There are also other types of local authorities in Alberta.

Democracy is often defined as a political system or system of government, in which citizens have a voice in decision-making. Democracy involves consideration of equality, fairness, freedoms and justice.

A **representative democracy** provides citizens with the ability to elect a representative to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

All municipal governments have councils that **govern**, or make decisions for, their geographic area.

The provincial government is involved with **managing**, or looking after, improvement districts.

A **ward** or district is a geographic area that a municipality can use to divide areas for election purposes, based on the number of people who live there. The council of a municipal district may have one or more councillors for every **electoral division**, or ward, in the municipal district.

Critical Issue 3: Why share?

A **belief** is something that is assumed to be the truth.

An **attitude** is a feeling, emotion or point of view about a situation. Attitudes can often be seen through our behaviours.

Values are ideas, items or beliefs that we believe to be very important.

Critical Issue 5: How democratic is our community?

The municipal government makes decisions by passing **bylaws** and **resolutions**. Some bylaws and resolutions establish rules that all people who live in or visit the municipality have to follow.

A **fact** describes something that has actually happened, or something that can be proven to be true.

An **opinion** describes an attitude, judgement, point of view or conclusion that cannot be proven true or false.

When articles present opinions as if they were true, they have a **bias**. A bias can also be represented when perspectives or points of view are left out or only one side of an issue is presented.



DIFFERENTIATE

In a **roundtable brainstorm**, students take turns sharing an idea or response with other group members. The group member to the right of the speaker takes responsibility for recording the idea on the group poster. The poster paper and pen is passed to the next group member as ideas are shared. Students can be provided with the option of adding visuals and graphics to their posters.

In a **carousel brainstorm**, each question is recorded on a poster paper. Groups rotate through to each poster to respond to the question. All group members can respond, or a group recorder can record the group's responses.

Critical Issues and Activities

What is a community? 1 to 2 class periods

❶ Communities can be defined in different ways and on different levels. Ask students to reflect on and share ideas about communities to which they feel a sense of belonging. Have students work in small groups to define and describe what community means, using a **roundtable** or **carousel brainstorm** strategy. Have groups share their perspectives and experiences in response to questions such as:

- Can there be more than one definition or description of a community? What are some of these? (*Encourage students to consider both geographic communities and groups to which they belong as they think about what community means.*)
- In what ways are you part of different communities?
- How can people build a sense of belonging to communities?

Have groups record their ideas and responses on poster paper. Share group posters in a class discussion.

Invite the class to consider how belonging to communities can influence and affect the decisions people make together. Discuss the following concepts and questions:

- Most geographic communities in Alberta are governed by a **local government**, the level of government given the power to make decisions that relate to local issues and services. Local government is also called **municipal government**. Municipal government is created by the provinces to provide services. Why do you think local government is an important aspect of communities?
- Cities, towns, villages, summer villages are examples of **municipalities**. **Municipal districts** are also municipalities and include many different landscapes – rural areas and farmland, forested areas, mountains and parkland. Municipal districts can also be called **counties** and can include smaller communities such as **hamlets** or **country residential subdivisions**, areas in which people build houses to live. What roles and responsibilities do you think municipalities have? What type of municipality or local authority is our geographic community in?

❷ Use a graphic organizer such as a **KWHL Chart (Appendix A: p. 200)** to help students brainstorm questions about municipalities and municipal government. Post the questions in the classroom.



WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website explores the structures, functions, roles and responsibilities of municipal government and municipalities in Alberta. Provide students with the opportunity, either in small groups or as a class, to view the home page of the website, found at http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6.cfm.

Invite students to review the information on the home page and respond to the questions. Students can be provided with a graphic organizer such as a T-Chart (**Appendix A: p. 201**) to record and organize responses, ideas and further questions. The text on the home page provides descriptions of community, local government and municipalities as well as the following questions:

- What does community mean to you?
- What do you know about local government?
- What are some unique features of the municipality in which you live?

What should and can a community provide? 3 to 4 class periods

1 Physically conceptualizing and constructing understandings of their own community encourages students to articulate and negotiate important aspects of what a community is and what it should provide to the people who live there. This process provides a starting point for developing deeper understandings or correcting misconceptions students may have about the locations of services and facilities, their purpose and importance. This type of constructivist activity can encourage students to expand their understanding of community beyond neighbourhood boundaries that many students associate with the concept of community.

Ask students to continue to work with their small groups. Invite groups to think about how they would represent their geographic community by posing questions such as:

- What does the community look like?
- What natural places exist within the community?
- What types of services and facilities do people build and use?
- If you could paint, draw or create a model of an ideal community, what would be important to include?

2 Have each group create a mural poster that represents a bird's-eye-view of what they would consider to be an ideal community.

- Provide each group with large poster paper and art supplies, such as construction paper, paints, glue sticks and scissors.



THINK ABOUT

Students are introduced to the concept of **community** in the Kindergarten Social Studies Program of Studies. Community is defined as “a group of people with commonalities that may include culture, language, values and beliefs, interests, practices and ways of life, history, and/or geographically defined shared space.”

Building Communities Through Local Government uses this definition to encourage students to explore the relationship between communities and municipal government.

Municipalities are administrative entities comprised of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it.

Source: Kindergarten to Grade 3 Social Studies Program of Studies (2005): p. 6.



ASSESS

The mural poster activity provides an excellent opportunity to observe how students work collaboratively in groups. As they negotiate and discuss what to include and where to locate places, observe for how they listen and respect others' points of view.



INTEGRATE

ART – EXPRESSION

Students will develop themes, with an emphasis on global awareness, based on environment and places; manufactured and human-made things.

The mural poster can provide an opportunity for students to experiment with different composition techniques and means of expression to visually represent services and facilities in their community environments.

- Use local media sources, such as newspapers and magazines, to help identify stores, businesses and other places that are in the community.
- Draw, cut and paste pictures, create buildings, streets or roads and features and develop a legend for symbols and icons used on the mural poster.
- Ask students to discuss and decide how they should represent their community on their murals. Depending on their choices, students may be given the choice to create murals of a whole city, town, village or a rural area.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be provided with options for creating their geographic communities. This activity is based on the creation of a poster mural. However, students can create a three-dimensional model on a tabletop or floor space. Students may also choose to draw or paint the community.

Alternatively, a map of a community (or different communities), showing only roads, can be used as the basis for students to identify different types of services and facilities provided in a community. Have each group create a map focused on an aspect of community life. Ask groups to share their maps to build a deeper understanding of what communities should provide.

Students can also be given the option of creating a photograph mural of the community, using disposable or digital cameras.

3 Provide time for each group to orally present their murals to the class. Explore similarities and differences between murals by asking questions such as the following:

- In what ways are the community murals similar or different?
- Are there any elements in the murals that contradict each other? If so, what reasons could there be for these contradictions?
- What experiences do you think influence and form the ways we see our communities?
- What additional information do we need to represent a community accurately and realistically?

Invite students to consider and discuss what communities should provide for a good quality of life for people.

4 Introduce students to the question “What can a municipality provide?” Revisit the concepts of municipality and municipal government, introduced in the first critical issue activity. Use a whole class discussion to ask students to share their ideas in response to the question. Invite students to work with a partner to start to explore the types of services

and facilities that municipalities provide. Provide each pair with **Student Resource 1-1: Building Municipalities (pp. 45-48)**. This student resource introduces students to the concepts of municipal government and democracy, and asks students to:

- Identify different types of services and facilities found in municipalities
- Consider what is important for municipalities to provide to the people who live there
- Explore what the role of municipal government should be in providing facilities and services
- Think about the role and importance of decision-making in a municipality
- Compile a checklist of criteria for a municipality that provides a good quality of life for all.

5 Ask students to continue working with their partners to examine the different municipalities in Alberta. Provide **Student Resource 1-2: Municipalities in Alberta (pp. 49-54)** to students. This student resource:

- Introduces students to, and poses questions about, the different types of municipalities and other local authorities in Alberta
- Invites students to consider the similarities and differences between different types of municipalities, including those with rural and urban ways of life, using the Venn Diagram graphic organizer. (*Municipalities are all governed by the Municipal Government Act and therefore have the same structures, functions and responsibilities. Differences exist between larger and smaller urban municipalities as well as in those municipalities that combine urban and rural areas in the types of decisions they must make about resources and the types of services they can provide.*)

Have students use the map of Alberta municipalities to discuss the location of their municipality in relation to other municipalities. Ask students to discuss what they notice about different municipalities:

- Which municipalities would you identify as urban? Which would you identify as rural? What are the differences? Why do you think it can be challenging to identify some municipalities as one or the other? (*Municipalities in Alberta are not categorized as urban or rural, but rather by their population density and area. However, cities, towns, villages and summer villages can be considered urban. Areas in which there is less dense population settlement are considered rural. These areas may include hamlets. It can be challenging to identify municipalities as either urban or rural as many municipalities have aspects of both. For example, large hamlets, such as Sherwood Park and Fort McMurray, function like cities yet are part of specialized municipalities that also include rural areas.*)



DIFFERENTIATE

Student checklists can be discussed and compared to create a list of criteria for a municipality that provides a good quality of life. These criteria can be added to or revised as students learn more about local government. Peer awarded votes or marks can be used to make decisions about a whole class criteria list.

- To what extent do you think the environment of a municipality can affect the ways people decide what is important? (*Encourage students to consider how the location, landscape and resources can influence the decisions people make about services and facilities that support and enhance their quality of life.*)
- What type of municipality is our community? Why? How many communities make up our municipality? What are some of them? (*Discuss the idea that municipalities may contain more than one geographic community. A municipal district, for example, may include a number of hamlets, country residential subdivisions, urban service areas or agricultural communities. An urban municipality may contain a number of distinct neighbourhoods that can be considered communities.*)



WEBSITE

Have student revisit the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to start to explore the different types of municipalities and local authorities found in Alberta:

- Larger urban municipalities, such as cities
- Smaller urban municipalities, such as towns, villages and summer villages
- Municipal districts that include rural areas and unincorporated hamlets
- Other types of local authorities, such as improvement districts, specialized municipalities and special areas
- Métis Settlements, which are not municipalities, but provide a form of local authority.

The *Municipal Government Act* states that a municipality is a corporation. A municipality has “natural person powers,” which means that it has the rights and powers of an individual for the purpose of exercising its authority.

These types of municipalities are found once students enter the website and encounter a map. Each municipality is described in a text window that students can access by clicking on the ☺ icon. Students can use the up and down scroll arrows to read the information in each text window.

Have students use a graphic organizer such as the **Clipboard (Appendix A: p. 203)** to identify and describe similarities and differences between different types of municipalities. The descriptions in the text window on the website are repeated on **Student Resource 1-2: Municipalities in Alberta (pp. 49-54)**.



DIFFERENTIATE

Provide students with a choice in using the website or **Student Resource 1-2: Municipalities in Alberta** to find information about different types of municipalities and other local authorities.

- 6 Invite students to consider the difference between a municipality and a community. What can both provide to offer a good quality of life? *(Encourage students to think about ways that communities provide a sense of belonging and sharing. Municipalities can provide facilities and services, depending on the decisions they make.)*

Discuss the extent to which we often tend to identify our communities by the immediate neighbourhoods in which we live and our personal interests and involvements. Ask students to reflect on ways that communities can be identified in the context of municipalities – such as municipal districts, cities, towns and villages. Revisit and reinforce the definition of municipalities and municipal government.

Guide student discussion and comparisons by asking questions such as the following:

- What is the difference between neighbourhoods and communities? *(Communities can have a broad range of understandings, ranging from an entire urban community, such as a city or town, to an area with identified boundaries within an urban centre, to a village or hamlet. A community can also be a group of people to which a sense of belonging is felt, such as an ethnic community or a community of musicians. A neighbourhood is often described as a geographic area within an urban centre, suburb or country residential subdivision, with identified boundaries.)*
- How big can a community be? *(Communities can range in size, from very large to very small, depending on how they are defined and what is used to define them, such as geographic size or population.)*
- How are boundaries used to define communities? *(Boundaries can be used to establish areas within and between communities. Municipalities also have boundaries. These are used to define cities, towns, villages and municipal districts as municipalities. Boundaries can be geographical or political.)*
- How are municipalities different from communities? *(Municipalities can include more than one community. Municipalities are areas established by the provincial government with the purpose of providing local government. Communities have many different functions, and can include many different neighbourhoods. Communities are often formed by groups of people with a shared sense of purpose.)*
- What impact do you think this difference has on local government and the ways people participate and make decisions in their communities? *(Local governments must balance the needs of all people and communities in the municipality. People from different communities that are part of one municipality have to work and make decisions together.)*

Present the question “What must a municipality provide?” to the class. Invite students to share their ideas and create a list on the board. As students present their ideas, ask them to consider questions or challenges such as the following:

- What may happen if a municipality does not have the resources to provide a facility or service?
- What if there are many people who live in a municipality who have different ideas about what is important?
- Do you think there are facilities and services that are essential for every municipality to provide? *(Tell students that they will be exploring ways that municipalities make decisions about the facilities and services they provide. Consider introducing and discussing some of the following ideas that students may be interested and intrigued in knowing. The Municipal Government Act requires municipalities to provide a council, chief administrative officer, bylaw enforcement, a disaster services committee, a land use bylaw, and tax and assessment notices. Many other facilities and services are choices that each municipality can make. For example, a municipality is not required to provide a fire department or ambulance service. If a municipality decides to provide certain services, there may be requirements imposed to meet safety requirements. For example, if a municipality provides municipal water, then it must meet certain drinking water standards. Or if a municipality decides to build a road, it does not have to be built with curbs, gutters, sidewalks or lights, unless the municipality chooses to provide these.)*

Invite students to revisit their community murals and consider whether the ideas they have identified for a good quality of life in a municipality are reflected in their murals. What is missing? What types of choices might be involved in providing additional facilities and services?



WEBSITE

Students can be directed to the link to different Alberta municipalities on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to find their municipality. Check the links to different municipalities on this website to ensure this information is available before having students use it. Ensure that you preview website content for appropriateness.

Links to various municipalities can be accessed through the Municipal Profiles on the Municipal Affairs site at <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cfml/profiles/index.cfm>.

Why share? 1 to 3 class periods

1 Local government involves interactions and relationships that exist within a community. Citizens are connected to each other through facilities and services that they share. The concept of sharing is central to understanding the necessity and importance of local government.

Have students revisit their community models and use a graphic organizer, such as a **Bubble Map (Appendix A: p. 204)**, to identify facilities and services they use in their own or other communities. With themselves in the centre of the map, identify and describe facilities and services they use. Discuss the bubble maps with questions such as the following:

- Which of these facilities and services are shared with others in our community?
- With whom are they shared?
- Why and how are these facilities and services shared by all people who live in our community?
- In what ways should these and other facilities and services be shared?

2 Write the words “public spaces” and “private spaces” on the board. Ask students to brainstorm and discuss differences.

- Start with the idea of public and private spaces in homes or in the school. For example, private spaces may include rooms, closets, desks or lockers that are used by one individual. Public spaces may include kitchens, living rooms, gymnasiums or classrooms that many individuals share.
- Discuss how more than one individual may use a private space, but only if the person who owns it consents to this use.
- Ask students to think about how the concepts of private and public spaces can apply to a community and a municipality. (*Encourage students to consider examples such as privately owned businesses that set hours when people can come in or private homes or land. Public spaces that students consider may include roads, streets and sidewalks, public parks or recreational facilities, libraries and public lighting.*)

Have students work with their small groups and use a **group consult** strategy to complete **Student Resource 1-3: Shared Spaces (pp. 55-56)**. This student resource asks students to:

- Identify public spaces and private spaces in communities. (*Encourage students to consider how some spaces, such as roads, walkways, parks and recreational facilities are public spaces and are used by all members of the community. Other spaces, such as homes and businesses, are private and can only be used by other members of the community if the owner consents.*)



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be given the choice of drawing a map of the community or communities to show the places they use, instead of using the Bubble Map.



ASSESS

Look for ways that students demonstrate willingness to share original ideas and perspectives about the concepts of sharing and responsibilities.



DIFFERENTIATE

In a **group consult**, students work in a group to take on different roles and cooperatively develop responses. As one group member reads or reviews the first question, group members discuss possible responses. The student to the left of the reader checks to see that all group members understand and agree on a response. When there is agreement, each group member picks up a pen and records a response in his or her own words. Have students rotate roles through the group.

- Reflect on how beliefs, attitudes and values influence the meaning of sharing. *(These concepts may need to be explored with students before they complete the handout student resource. A **belief** is something that is assumed to be the truth. An **attitude** is a feeling, emotion or point of view about a situation. Attitudes can often be seen through our behaviours. **Values** are ideas, items or beliefs that we believe to be very important.)*
- Connect the concept of shared spaces to the responsibilities of local government.
- Consider how sharing affects quality of life.



PARTICIPATE: Schools Involved with Communities

Develop a list of five to ten ways that the school is involved, or could be involved, with the community. Develop criteria with students to analyze the effectiveness of these involvements. Consider having students exchange positive messages about the effectiveness of each other's ideas for school–community involvement.

Consider questions such as the following in developing the list and criteria:

- What features and facilities does your school share with the community? *(Consider ways that some school facilities are used for community meetings, events or elections, when school policies and insurance permits.)*
- What responsibilities do you have as a student in your school and community?
- How should your school support the activities of the community?
- What activities do you do in your school to support the community? What activities could your school do? *(Consider ideas such as inviting community members to school events and distributing a school newsletter to community members.)*
- What could you do to strengthen the relationship your school has with the community?

What does it mean to be a citizen? 2 to 3 class periods

1 How do students connect their daily lives to their citizenship? Ask students to discuss what “being a citizen” looks like, sounds like and feels like. Complete a graphic organizer, such as a **Triple T-Chart (Appendix A: p. 202)** with the entire class, recording ideas and examples the students provide. Encourage students to make connections between what they experience in their municipality and what citizenship means.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be given the choice of completing their own T-Chart or interviewing one or two other students to complete the T-Charts.

What being a citizen looks like...	What being a citizen sounds like...	What being a citizen feels like...
Community meetings	People talking about issues	Belonging
Neighbours working together	Making a decision with a group	Friendship
City hall		Respect
		Responsibility

2 Municipal government takes responsibility for looking after all communities within the municipality. Citizens and groups share this responsibility. How far do these responsibilities go? Questions that encourage students to develop a commitment to their municipality set the stage for thinking about citizenship and involvement with local government. Ask students to consider the following question:

- As a citizen of the municipality, how much responsibility do you have for what happens around you?

Invite students to revisit their community murals and share examples of ways that citizens take, and should take, responsibility in and for their communities and municipalities.

Have students use a graphic organizer, such as a **Sphere of Influence Chart (Appendix A: p. 205)**, to consider the extent to which they are responsible within and beyond their municipalities. Place themselves in the centre of the sphere of influence chart and move outward through each circle of the chart, moving from themselves to their homes, neighbourhoods, communities, municipalities, the province and beyond. Have students describe or draw examples of ways that they are, or should be, responsible to their municipalities.




DIFFERENTIATE

Provide options for students in completing graphic organizers – using textual descriptions, examples, visuals or symbols in their charts. Encourage students to use prior knowledge and experiences by including examples from the community in which they live now, as well as other communities in which they may have lived previously.



WEBSITE

What should municipal government be responsible for? Have students revisit the municipalities on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to look for and identify examples of public and private facilities and services in the municipalities. Once students enter the website, they will see a map. There are three municipalities on the map that students can access by clicking on the  icon to enter or leave. Students can also enter these three municipalities by clicking on the picture icons at the bottom of the map.

Students can use the **Scrapbook** feature on the website to record visuals that represent different facilities and services they find in each municipality. To access the **Scrapbook**, students must click on the “ADD TO SCRAPBOOK” bar in each text window. This records a visual in the **Scrapbook** page. The **Scrapbook** page can be printed and provides the visual and space to record ideas and information. The **Scrapbook** feature is session based. This means that students must print their **Scrapbook** pages when they are finished on the site, or they will lose the visuals they have collected.

Ask students to consider each place they identify using questions such as:

- Which of these facilities and services do you think local government takes responsibility for?
- What should these responsibilities be?

Alternatively, students can be invited to use a graphic organizer, such as a **Multi-Flow Map (Appendix A: p. 206)** to predict and organize their thinking. Have students record a shared public facility or service in the centre of the multi-flow map, and record, in the boxes around the centre, questions, ideas and what they know about ways it is used in the municipality.

3 Municipal governments often must balance decisions about those services and facilities that look after the essential needs of community members, with those services and facilities that enhance and benefit quality of life. Invite students to talk about, write about or draw a response to questions such as:

- What types of services and facilities are essential for municipal governments to provide?
- What types of services and facilities would you consider to be optional?
- Are there any services or facilities that you think a municipality should not provide? What are these? Why?
- How do you think the responsibilities of individual citizens compare to those of municipal governments? (*Remind students that municipal governments have to take responsibility for the needs of the entire municipality; do individuals have to do the same?*)

Use class ideas to develop a list of criteria that would help identify what makes services and facilities essential and what makes them optional for municipal governments to provide to the communities they serve.

How democratic is our community? 2 to 4 class periods

1 Invite students to revisit or review what the concept of democracy means to them by discussing the question:

- What do you think of when you hear the word **democracy**? (*Democracy is often defined as a political system, or system of government, in which citizens have a voice in decision-making. Democracy involves consideration of equality, fairness, freedoms and justice.*)

Ask students to brainstorm the qualities that are needed for a democracy to exist. Create a class list of ideas. Students may be encouraged to consider ideas such as:

- Representatives that are elected
- Freedoms to make choices or express opinions
- Ability to vote for representatives
- Equity, or respecting both individual and collective rights
- A justice system that applies to everyone
- Involved citizens
- Governments that take responsibility for their actions.



THINK ABOUT

These concepts are developed in the core resources for the Alberta Grade 6 Social Studies program. If students have not been introduced to these concepts, discuss what each means and invite students to generate a list of questions or ideas.

2 Invite students to work with a partner to identify and find examples that represent “democracy in action” in their community. List or clip examples and collect them in a file folder. Use sources such as:

- Newspapers and magazines (stories, headlines, advertisements, photographs)
- Local, community or school newsletters
- Pictures.

Introduce students to the question “How democratic is our community?” and ask them to discuss what their examples tell them about democracy in the community. Ask students to consider what a community without democracy would be like.

3 **Student Resource 1-4: Democracy and Local Government (pp. 57-58)** encourages students to analyze and reflect on the connections between local government, municipalities and democracy. This student resource:

- Reviews the purpose of local government in Alberta as it is defined in the *Municipal Government Act*
- Asks students to use the examples they collected from media and community sources, as well as their own personal stories and pictures, as examples to help them construct and support a personal response to the question “How democratic is our community?”



ASSESS

Student Resource 1-4: Democracy and Local Government also provides the performance assessment task for this section. A rubric is provided in the assessment notes and should be shared and discussed with students prior to beginning the task.



INTEGRATE

LANGUAGE ARTS 3.2 SELECT AND PROCESS

Have students add sources to their media poster assignment that reflect personal experiences and perspectives – music lyrics, stories, art, poetry – or those that reflect experiences of people around them – family, neighbours, friends.

Music lyrics and stories can be drawn from different types of sources:

- Popular music that students are familiar with
- Picture books and excerpts from library books
- Newspaper or magazine stories.



THINK ABOUT

Start a clippings collection of articles about the municipality and municipal government. These articles will be used in activities in **Section 2: A Good Place to Live**.



INTERACT

There are a number of ways to encourage students to become involved with municipal government. Start by contacting the municipal office. Some of your students may come from different municipalities than the one in which the school is located. Consider this when planning activities that involve municipal officials.

- Work with students to brainstorm a list of questions about what the municipality does and who is involved in municipal government in your community. If applicable, identify each municipality that students in your class come from.
- Help students identify community or municipal government websites that can be used for research.
- Get together with other grade 6 teachers in your school and contact a municipal government office by e-mail, phone call or letter to discuss ways a municipal official could be involved with students as they study municipal government.
- Invite a municipal employee or elected official to come to the classroom to be interviewed by the class. Have students revisit questions they created at the beginning of their study of local government. Prepare the interview questions to send to the municipal official in advance of the interview.
- Alternatively, select three or four interview questions to e-mail or mail to a municipal official and ask if responses can be returned or, if appropriate and possible, posted on the website as an FAQ section for students.

Appendix B (pp. 214-216) provides tools and processes for contacting municipal officials in your community.

Student Resource 1-1

Building Municipalities

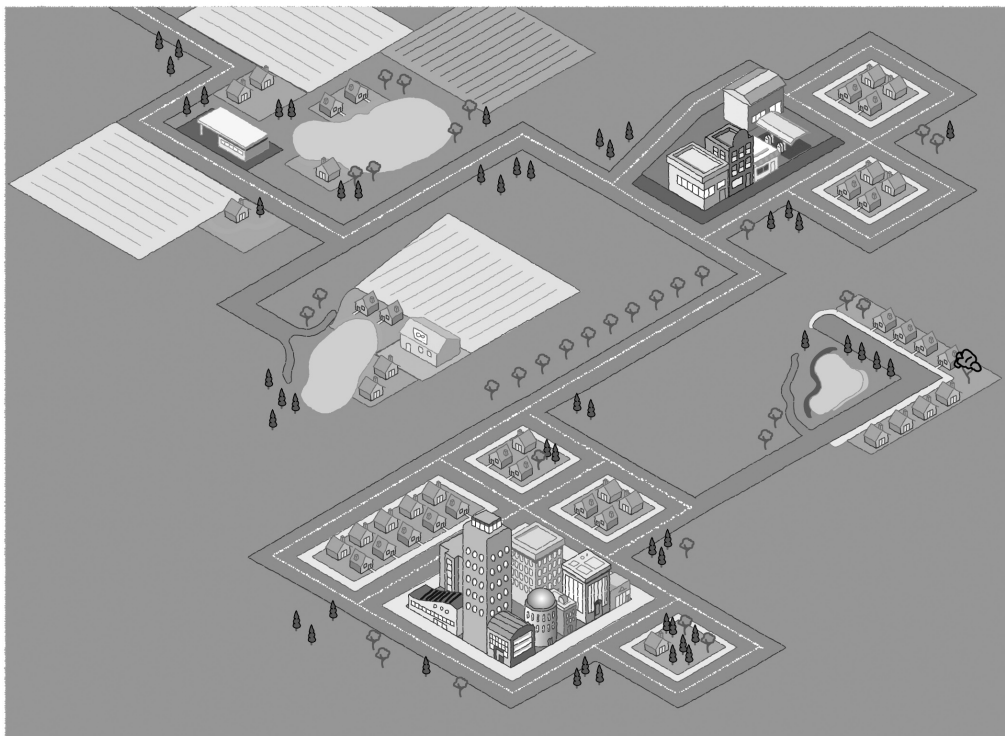


When people hear the word **community**, many think of a neighbourhood, town, city or area. A community can be a group of people who have something in common. This can include where they live, a common identity or a sense of belonging. Being part of a community can involve having a common history or common interests. Community members often share purposes or goals.

Local governments work within communities to represent the interests and goals of community members. Local governments provide services to residents, or people who live in the community, and encourage them to make local decisions together, build positive relationships and learn from each other. This strengthens the community as a whole.

In Alberta, the areas that are served by local governments are called **municipalities**. There are different types of municipalities. Each has similar structures and functions and may deal with similar or different issues. **Municipal government** is local government that is created by the province to provide essential and desired services to communities.

How do you think local government affects the many places you find in different municipalities? Use the illustration below and chart on the next page to predict ways that local government affects places in different types of municipalities.



Places Where	How I Think Local Government Affects these Places
people live	
people buy goods and obtain services	
people work	
people play	
community activities happen	
natural features are protected	

Alberta has legislation called the *Municipal Government Act*. It says that the purpose of a municipality is to:

- Provide good government
- Provide services, facilities or other things that are important or necessary for all or part of a municipality
- Develop and maintain safe and viable communities within the municipality.

Something that is **viable** has the ability to grow and develop. What are some examples of things that are viable?

What do you think a viable community would look like? What do you think a safe community would look like? What could this information help you add to your chart?

Making Decisions

The **municipal council** is a group of people who are elected to make decisions on behalf of people who live in the municipality. The people on the municipal council are called **elected officials**. Elected officials represent **electors**, or the people who elect them, as well as residents, property owners and businesses. Sometimes the residents, property owners and businesses in a municipality are called **constituents**.

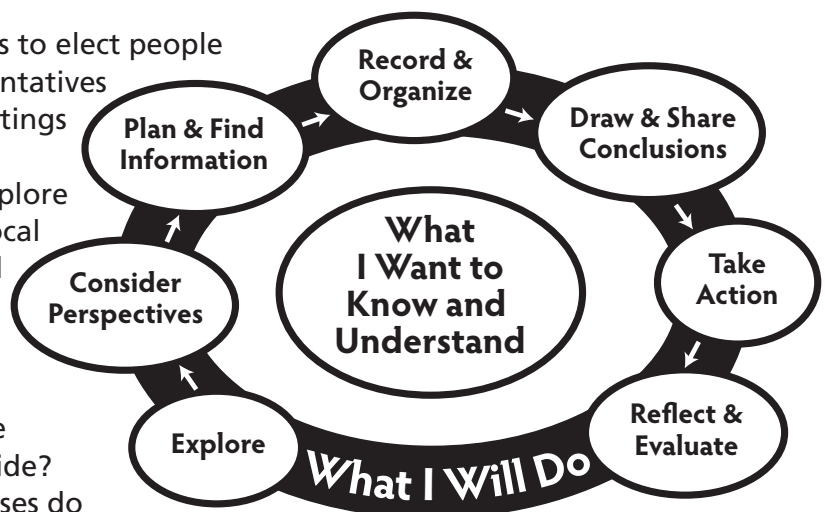
Elected officials are given the **authority**, or the power, to speak and make decisions for their constituents in council meetings. Although municipal councils are important, many other people work with municipal governments to provide different types of services to municipalities. For example, municipal employees are hired to work for the municipality and provide services such as safe drinking water and garbage collection.

Municipal governments:

- Are responsible for providing good government and maintaining the safety of their communities
- Encourage citizens to participate and cooperate with municipal governments, and work together to meet residents' needs and make decisions
- Consider the rights of all people, and respect and listen to all viewpoints.

When citizens have a voice in decisions and governance, this is called **democracy**. In a **representative democracy**, citizens have the ability to elect a representative to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

Each municipality has its own elections to elect people to represent the municipality. Representatives discuss issues and ideas in council meetings and are responsible for letting people know about their decisions. As you explore the responsibilities and functions of local government in municipalities, you will also use a model for decision-making and inquiry.



How do you think municipalities make decisions about the services they provide? What types of decision-making processes do you think they use?

Good Government

What would you expect to find and see in a municipality that is viable, safe and democratic?



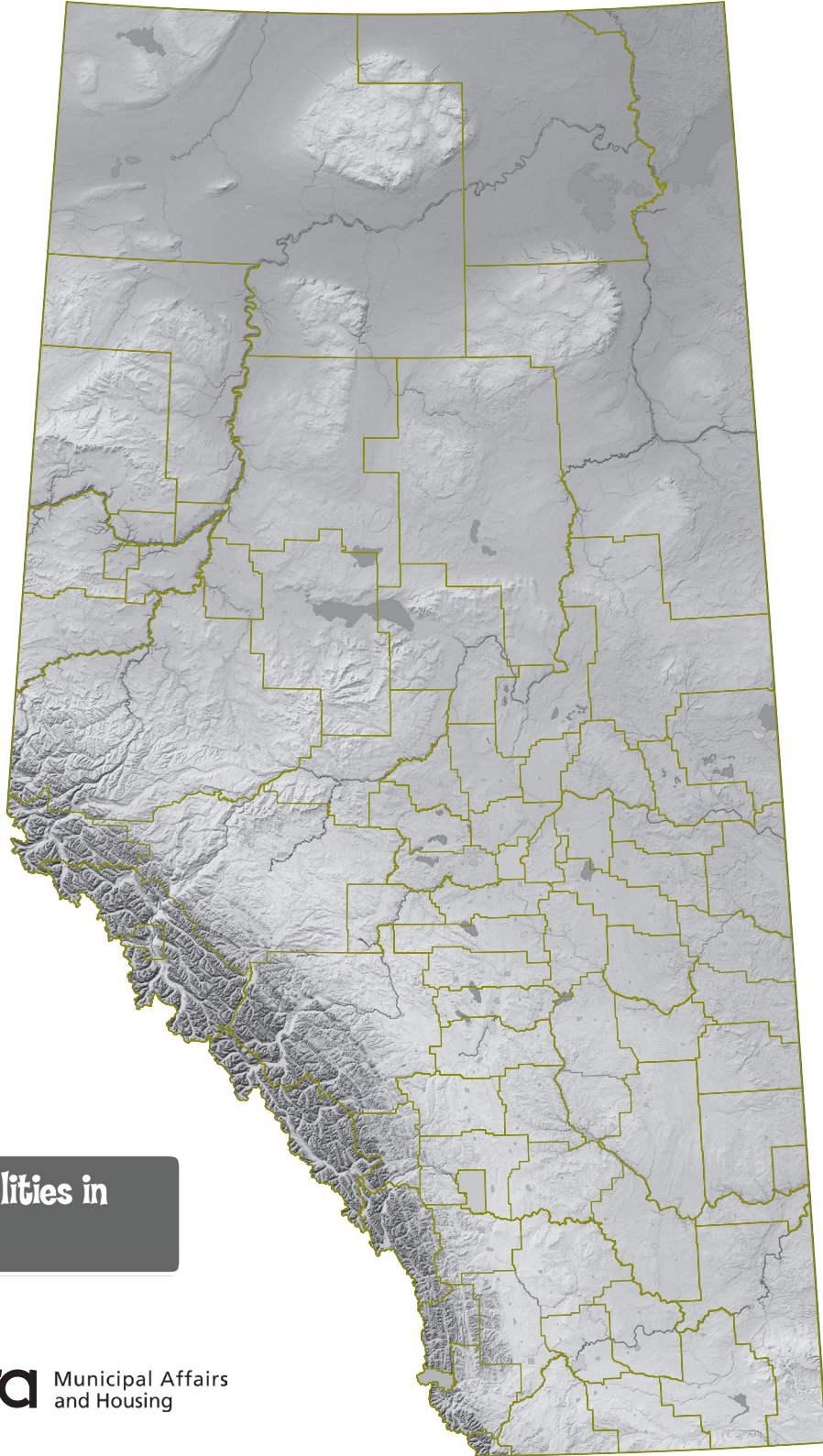
Create a Top Ten List of what you would expect to find and see in a municipality that supports a good quality of life.

1	
2	
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9	
10	

Student Resource 1-2

Alberta Municipalities

Where is your municipality?

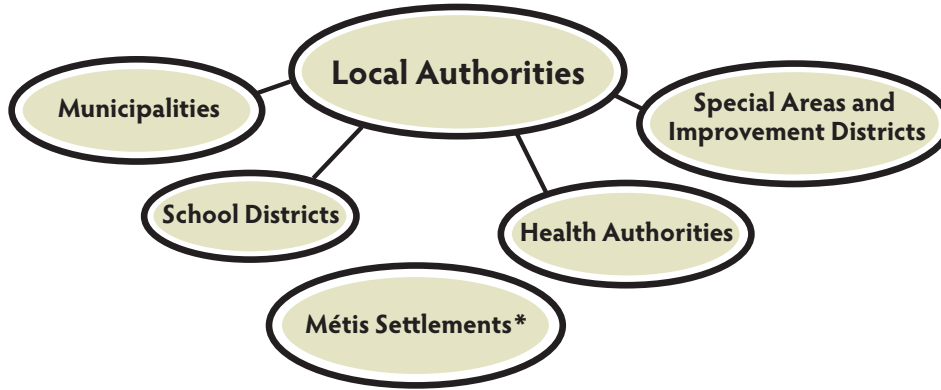


Municipalities in
Alberta

Alberta Municipal Affairs
and Housing

Local Authorities

Local authorities are areas in Alberta that provide local government. A municipality is considered to be a local authority. There are also other types of local authorities in Alberta.



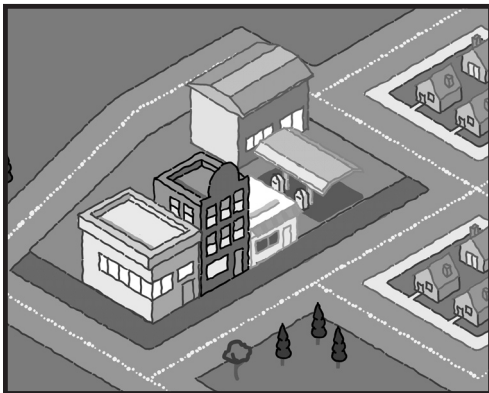
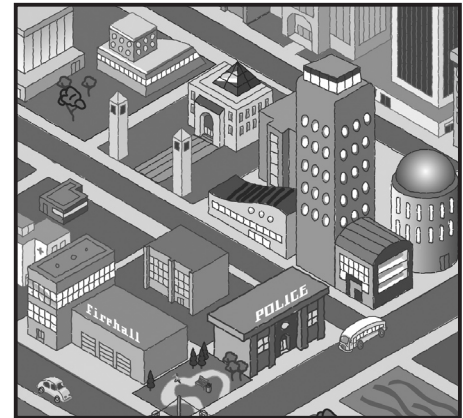
*A Métis Settlement is not a local authority, but provides services and governance like one.

Municipalities in Alberta

There are different types of municipal governments in Alberta. All municipal governments have councils that **govern**, or make decisions for, their area. These municipalities make decisions in similar ways, but may have different structures, populations and population densities.

Cities

Cities are large urban municipalities with a population of at least 10 000 people. Cities can have **ward** systems, with councillors who are elected in each ward, and are governed by a mayor and a council. A ward is a district that any municipality can use to divide areas, based on the number of people who live there. Which municipalities in Alberta are currently classified as cities?



Towns

Towns can be formed when an area has at least 1 000 people. Towns are governed by seven councillors, including the mayor, unless the town has decided to have a higher or lower number. The number of councillors can be no lower than three and must be an odd number. Why do you think councils have an odd number of councillors?

Villages

Villages must have a population of at least 300 people. The council of a village has at least three councillors. One of these councillors is the mayor. This number may be increased to a higher odd number of councillors. Why do you think a village would consider having a council with a higher number of councillors?



Summer Villages

Summer villages are a form of government that was designed to meet the needs of part-time residents. Summer villages required at least 60 per cent of the land to have buildings used as dwellings. A summer village is a type of municipality that may no longer be created. Residents of a summer village are allowed to vote in two municipal elections. They can vote once in the summer village where they have property, such as a cabin or cottage, but do not live there full time. Residents may also vote once in the municipality where they live permanently. Why do you think these citizens have this ability?

Municipal Districts

Municipal districts are rural areas and include many different landscapes such as farmland, forested areas, mountains and parkland. Municipal districts can include smaller communities such as hamlets or **country residential subdivisions**, more densely populated areas in which people build houses to live. Some municipal districts include larger population areas such as those around Edmonton and Calgary. The council of a municipal district may have one or more councillors for every **electoral division**, or **ward**, in the municipal district. Why do you think there are municipal districts in Alberta?

Hamlets

The council of a municipal district can designate a small community that is within its boundaries to be a hamlet. A community can be a hamlet if it consists of five or more dwellings, has a name, boundaries that help identify the community and contains land that is non-residential. Why do you think a community should have a name?

Did you know?

Counties were originally formed to govern the municipality as well as the school board. When school boards were reorganized in the 1990s, there was no longer a need for counties to look after the government of both the municipality and the school board. Today, these areas are considered to be municipal districts, although some have kept the word "county" in their names. Some municipal districts have changed their name to include "county."

Specialized Municipalities

Specialized municipalities are formed when other forms of municipalities do not meet the needs of the people who live there. They often include both urban and rural areas. The specialized municipalities in Alberta in 2007 were the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Strathcona County, the Municipality of Jasper and Mackenzie County. What can you find out about these municipalities? Why do you think they are specialized?

Other Local Authorities

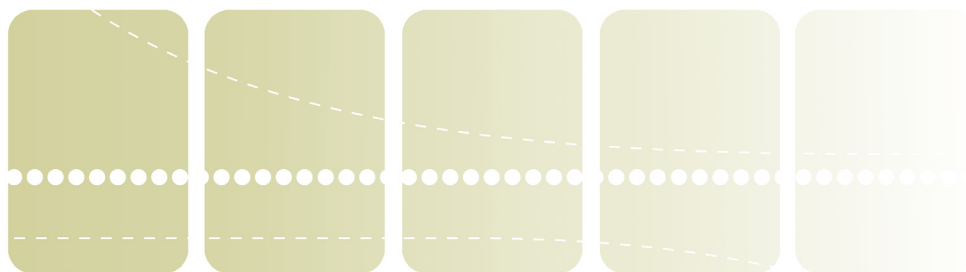
There are other areas in Alberta that are called **local authorities**. Special boards or councils are set up or elected to govern and make decisions for these areas. Examples of local authorities are improvement districts, special areas, school boards and health authorities. Métis Settlements are not a local authority. However, Métis Settlements function as a local government structure for Métis people.

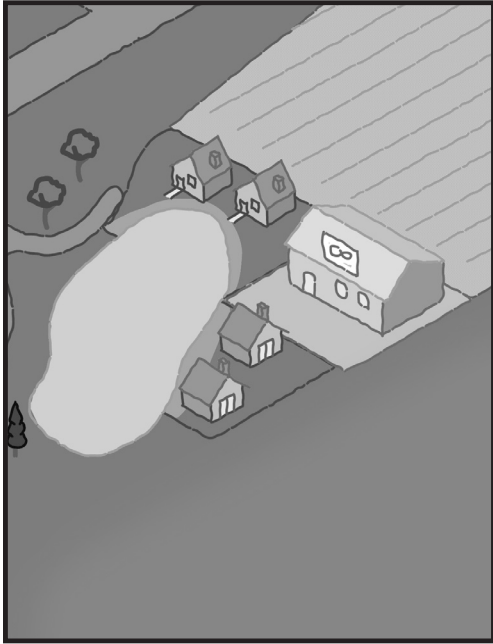
Improvement Districts

Improvement districts are rural areas that have an advisory council, usually made up of seven to nine members. The provincial government is responsible for the functions of municipal government in improvement districts. The Minister of Municipal Affairs can appoint an advisory council that can be councillors who are elected. The advisory council governs the municipality on behalf of the provincial government. Five of the seven improvement districts in Alberta are located in national parks – Banff, Jasper, Waterton, Elk Island and Wood Buffalo. The other two improvement districts are provincial parks – Kananaskis Improvement District and Willmore Wilderness. Why do you think the provincial government is more involved with **managing**, or looking after, improvement districts?

Special Areas

A special area is a different government structure that is used in a rural area located in southeast Alberta. There are three special areas in southeast Alberta, but they are often referred to as one because they are governed by a single board. The special areas were created near the end of the Depression to help deal with the hardships that the drought caused in these areas. The special areas have a board of three people appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. There is also a 13-member advisory council. The Special Areas Board is responsible for providing all municipal services and looking after the land. Sixty per cent of all lands are used for grazing, cultivation or irrigation. What do you know about this area of Alberta?





Métis Settlements

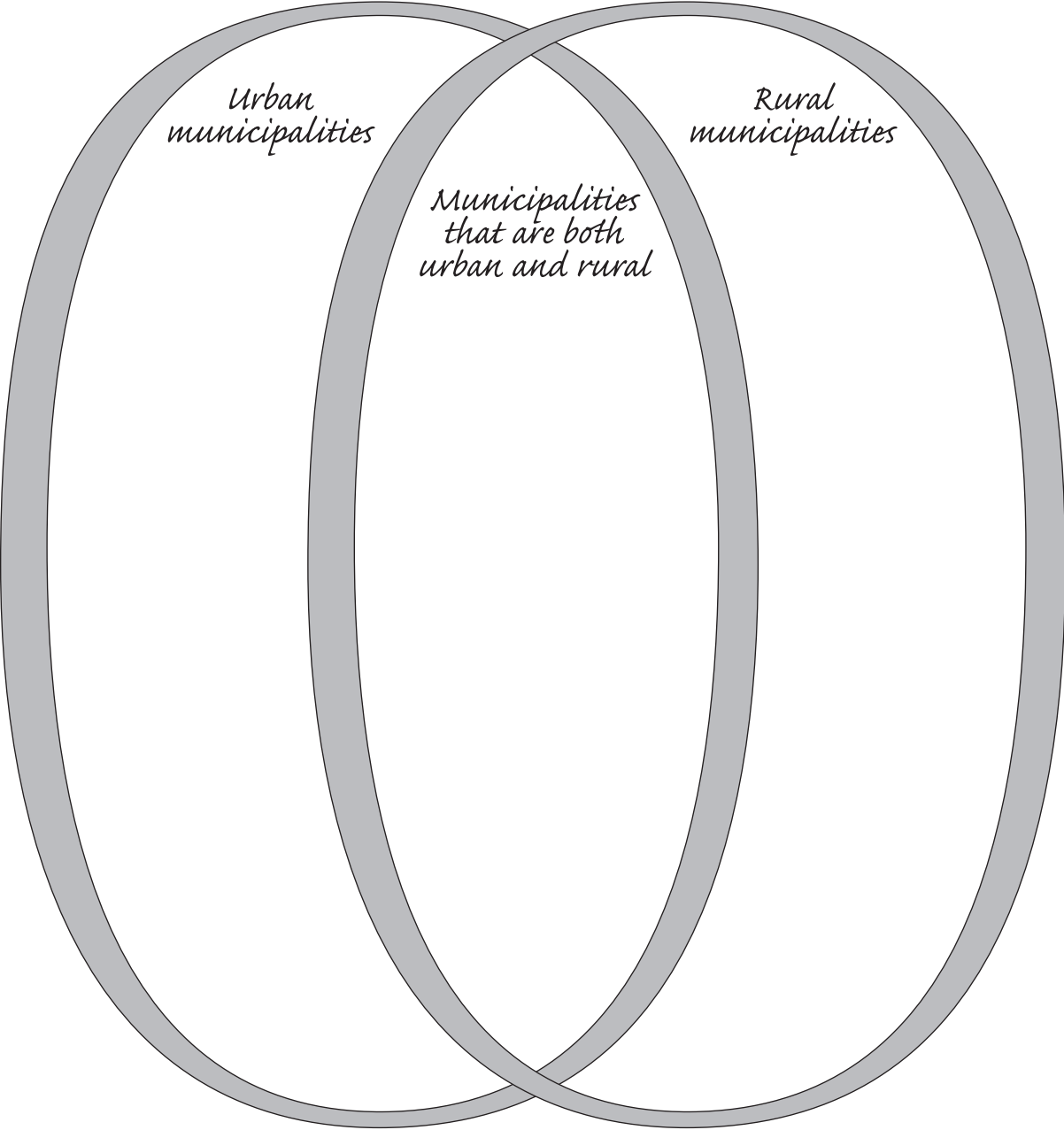
There are eight Métis Settlements in Alberta that were established by the *Métis Settlements Act of Alberta*. Métis Settlements are not considered to be municipalities, but are a form of local government. The Métis Settlements in Alberta are Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine. Approximately 9 000 people live on the eight settlements. Métis Settlements are governed by the Métis Settlements General Council. The General Council represents all Métis people in the eight settlements. The Métis Settlements General Council has five elected councillors from each of the eight settlements. These forty councillors elect a four-member executive, or leadership team. Why do you think Métis Settlements elect a general council to represent all people in each of the settlements?

First Nations Reserves

A First Nations reserve is not part of any municipality. The federal government takes responsibility for First Nations reserves.

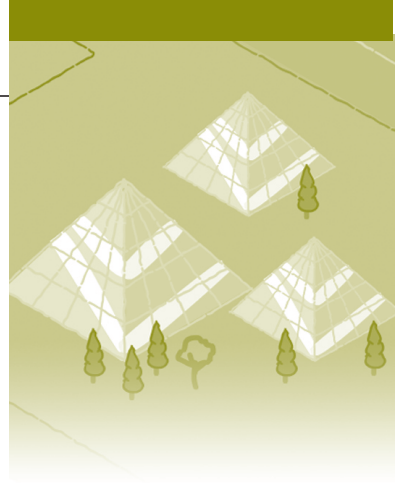
**What kind of municipality or local authority do you live in?
Describe the characteristics of your municipality or local authority.**

Identify the types of municipalities that are urban municipalities in the first circle of the Venn Diagram below. In the second circle, identify the types of municipalities that are rural. In the centre, identify those municipalities that have both urban and rural communities and ways of life.



Student Resource 1-3

Shared Spaces

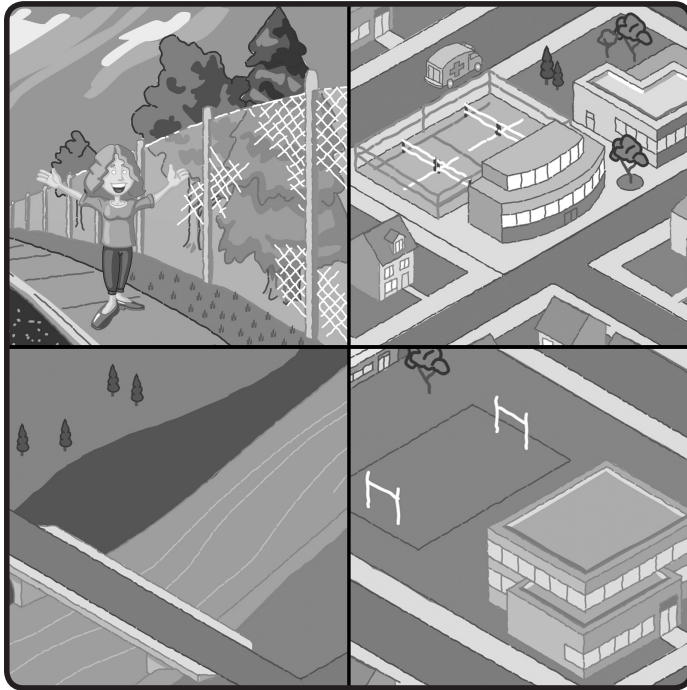


What are some shared, or public, spaces in your community? What are some personal, or private, spaces in your community? Use the chart below to help you record information about the different spaces in your community.

What I see	Where it is located	What it is used for	Shared (Public) or Personal (Private)

What does sharing mean to you?

Just like the concept of community, the concept of sharing can have different meanings. What meanings do the words and visuals below have to you?



“ *Shared space is the physical place we live. It is our home, our block and our neighbourhood. It is the land we walk and the air we breathe. It is the schools, parks, streets, woods and rivers that make up our world.*

Shared space is in our emotions. It is a sense of belonging. It is the place that families and neighbours call home. It is the place we plant our hearts.

Shared space is common beliefs, values and attitudes. It is communities working together to ensure the well being of all people.

Shared space is the focus of communities' decision-making. Its goal is to build strong and vibrant communities.

”

Adapted from Torjman, Sherri (2006). *Shared Space: The Communities Agenda*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy: Ottawa, ON: p. 1. www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/603ENG.pdf.

How do you think the use and care of shared spaces in the community affects the work that local governments do?

Who should be responsible for creating shared or public spaces in a community?

Why do you think sharing is important to the quality of life in a community?

Student Resource 1-4

Democracy and Local Government

A **democracy** gives citizens a voice in decision-making and action. A democracy is evident when there are:

- Representatives that are elected by citizens
- Freedoms to make choices or express opinions
- Ability to vote for representatives
- Equal rights and responsibilities for everyone
- A justice system that applies to everyone
- Involved citizens
- Governments that are accountable for their actions.

Think about what “democracy in action” could mean. Democracy in action might include community meetings or a local election. It might involve the rules that people in your municipality have to follow. The municipal government is responsible for making these rules. The municipal government makes decisions by passing **bylaws** and **resolutions**. Bylaws and resolutions are decisions that can establish the rules that all people and businesses have to follow.

The work of the municipal government affects the ways of life for everyone who lives in the municipality. In some municipalities, this can include more than one geographic community.

How democratic do you think your community is? What evidence of democracy can you find in your community? Start to look for stories and examples about your community to prepare for a Participation Challenge!

Choose stories and examples that will help you answer the question “How democratic is your community?”



Fact, Opinion and Bias

*Many newspaper and magazine stories contain a mixture of factual information and opinions. A **fact** describes something that has actually happened, or something that can be proven to be true. An **opinion** describes an attitude, judgement, point of view or conclusion that cannot be proven true or false.*

*When an opinion is expressed as if it were true, it has a **bias**. A bias can also be represented when perspectives or points of view are left out or only one side of an issue is presented.*

Think about whether the stories and examples you select represent facts or opinions about the community. Are any of these stories or examples biased toward a particular point of view? Should they be included?

● Participation Challenge ●

● **To: All youth in our community** ●

● **From: The Youth Participation Centre** ●

● **Re: Participation Challenge - How democratic is our community?** ●

● At the Youth Participation Centre, our goal is to help young people become ●
● involved in our community. We wonder how much young people understand ●
● about the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society. ●

● We have issued a challenge to our youth. We want you to go out into our ●
● community and find evidence of democracy in action! Youth submissions ●
● will be used by the Centre in a variety of ways as part of our public ●
● awareness campaign. ●

● To participate you will need to do the following: ●

● 1. Identify the key principles that you expect to find in a democracy. Then ●
● gather evidence of these principles at work in our community. Use a variety ●
● of resources to help you gather evidence, including: ●

- • websites ●
- • print materials – brochures, newspapers, books ●
- • photographs ●
- • interviews with family members and neighbours ●
- • personal experiences ●
- • family stories and artifacts. ●

● 2. Include a list of the resources you used during your research. Write a ●
● sentence or two to evaluate how effective you think each resource was. ●
● Identify any bias that limits the usefulness of the resource. ●

● 3. Express your opinion by responding to these questions: ●

- • How democratic is our community? ●
- • What strengths do we have as a democratic community? ●
- • Has your opinion changed as you have taken the Participation Challenge? ●
- • What suggestions do you have to make our community more democratic? ●

● 4. You can share your evidence and opinion in a variety of ways: ●

- • a multimedia presentation that can be posted on the Youth Participation ●
● Centre website ●
- • a poster for the Centre ●
- • an informational brochure for the Centre ●
- • a letter to the editor of the local newspaper ●
- • a song to be aired on the local radio station ●
- • a skit for an infomercial for the local cable TV station. ●

● We are looking forward to your submission. Let us know what you think! ●

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN A DEMOCRACY

Purpose, Powers and Capacity of a Municipality

Municipalities provide essential and non-essential local services such as road maintenance, water and sewer services and garbage collection. Municipalities share the characteristics of having land and boundaries, providing residents with ways to make decisions about local issues and being a focus for community activities.

In municipalities, there are also other local authorities, such as health care authorities and school boards. Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with Alberta’s municipalities to ensure Albertans live in safe and sustainable communities, and are served by open, effective and accountable governments.

The *Municipal Government Act*, the provincial legislation governing municipalities, outlines the purpose, powers and capacity of a municipality. Municipalities are established to:

- Provide good government
- Provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality
- Develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

The *Municipal Government Act* defines the broad powers or general jurisdiction of municipalities. For example, municipalities have the authority to regulate the activities of the public. These rules are found in municipal bylaws and resolutions. Bylaws and resolutions are passed by council under the authority established by the *Municipal Government Act*. The council uses resolutions as a way to make decisions when a bylaw is not required.

A municipality’s powers are addressed in the *Municipal Government Act*, which states “a municipality is a corporation” that has been provided with “natural person” powers. Natural person powers give municipalities the rights and powers of an individual for the purpose of exercising their authority. So, just as an individual can start up a business, enter into agreements, lease equipment or hire employees, so can a municipality. However, the municipality can use these powers only to the extent that those powers are limited by the *Municipal Government Act* or any other enactment of the legislature. The *Municipal Government Act* states that a council may pass bylaws for their municipalities respecting the following matters:

- The safety, health and welfare of people and the protection of people and property
- People, activities and things in, on or near a public place or place that is open to the public



TEACHER BACKGROUNDERS

This teacher backgrounder describes the concept of governance in municipalities. Governance in a municipality usually refers to the roles, responsibilities and activities of the municipal council. As the governing body of the municipal corporation, the council is the foundation of local democracy. However, the *Municipal Government Act* provides that councils can only exercise the powers of the municipal corporation in the proper form, either by bylaw or by resolution.

The council itself has specific roles to play, as does each elected representative. Some of these roles are legislated by the *Municipal Government Act*.

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- Nuisances, including unsightly property
- Transport and transportation systems
- Businesses, business activities and persons engaged in business
- Services provided by or on behalf of the municipality
- Public utilities
- Wild and domestic animals and activities in relation to them
- The enforcement of bylaws.

Acting within the legislation of the *Municipal Government Act*, the councillor's job is to work with other council members, including the mayor or reeve, to set the overall direction of the municipality through their role as a policy maker. The policies that council sets are the guidelines for administration to follow as it does the job of running a municipality. Council members may spend a lot of time researching, creating new policies and programs or reviewing the current ones to make sure they are working as they should.

The Entire Municipality

Elected officials on a municipality's council are elected to look after the interests of the entire municipality. In a municipality with a ward system, an official who has been elected to represent a ward must be careful not to place the interest of the ward or electoral division above the interest of the whole municipality. A ward or district is a geographical area that any municipality can use to divide areas equally, based on the number of people who live there. Municipalities may also choose to elect councillors at large, or by and for the whole municipality. As challenging as it may be at times, elected officials must base any decision on what is best for the entire municipality. The council's effectiveness depends on elected officials providing input on their areas while thinking and voting for the whole municipality.

Elected officials also have to make certain that they do not put themselves in a pecuniary interest situation. This means that they must ensure that decisions made do not monetarily affect them or their immediate family. When a council member or his or her family, employers, business interests or partnerships can potentially benefit or lose monetarily from decisions made by the council, he or she has a pecuniary interest. The *Municipal Government Act* states that "when a councillor has a pecuniary interest in a matter before the council, a council committee or any other body to which the councillor is appointed as a representative of the council, the councillor must, if present:

- Disclose the general nature of the pecuniary interest prior to any discussion of the matter
- Abstain from voting on any question relating to the matter
- Abstain from any discussion of the matter

Source:
Municipal Government Act,
Section 172(1).

- ...leave the room in which the meeting is being held until discussion and voting on the matter are concluded.”

A council can require, by passing a bylaw, that the councillor file a statement with the names of family members and employers, as well as any corporations, firms or partnerships from which the councillor benefits.

A councillor’s constituents have expectations that the councillor will represent them in an ethical and informed manner. Public perceptions of the openness of local government influences how the public interacts with the council. When issues arise in a municipality, the public may perceive a council member to have a conflict of interest. However, from a legislative context, the only guidelines that are established by the *Municipal Government Act* are for pecuniary interest.

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TEACHER BACKGROUNDER

This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the types of municipalities found in Alberta. Each type of municipality has unique characteristics. However, all are governed by the *Municipal Government Act*. The total number of municipalities can change over time.

Municipalities are often thought of as urban and rural. However, current municipalities in Alberta go beyond that understanding. Many municipalities have areas and influences that combine both urban and rural ways of life. The designation “rural” should not be interpreted to only include farm or resource based areas. Some rural municipalities contain substantial residential populations.

This backgrounder provides information on:

- Cities
- Towns
- Villages
- Summer Villages
- Specialized Municipalities
- Municipal Districts.

It also provides information on:

- Improvement Districts
- Special Areas
- Other Local Authorities
- Métis Settlements
- First Nations Reserves.

MUNICIPALITIES IN ALBERTA

A municipality is an administrative entity composed of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it. As a means of governance, municipalities can either have officials elected at-large or from wards, which divide the municipality into more manageable sections. When a ward system is used, each ward usually has the same number of councillors. The number of wards within a municipality are specified when it is formed, but may be changed by council through a bylaw. When a municipality has its councillors elected at-large, this means all councillors are elected by the eligible voters of the whole municipality. Candidates, or those nominated to run for election for a position on council, are required to be residents of the municipality for six consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day. Municipal elections are held every three years.

Urban municipalities (cities, towns, villages, summer villages) are formed in areas where the majority of buildings are on parcels of land smaller than 1 850 square metres. Municipal districts are formed in areas in which a majority of the buildings used as dwellings are on parcels of land with an area of at least 1 850 square metres.

Cities

Cities have populations of over 10 000 people. All cities have a mayor who is elected by all eligible voters. Cities are governed by a council, with a mayor or chief elected official who is most often elected at large by all residents, and an even number of councillors or aldermen.

Edmonton and Calgary are the only large urban cities that use a ward system. Other large urban cities such as Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer elect councillors at-large. In some cities, councillors are referred to as aldermen. The term “aldermen” is used to describe both male and female council members. There should always be an odd number of elected officials on the council to avoid tie votes.

Towns

Towns can be formed when the population is at least 1 000 people. A town’s population may exceed 10 000 people and remain a town unless it requests a change to city status. A town has a seven member council, including the mayor, unless a local bylaw establishes the number of council members to be higher or lower. However, the number of councillors should be no lower than three and be an odd number.

Villages

Villages may be formed in areas where there is a population of at least 300 people. A village may apply to the province for town status when the population reaches 1 000. The council of a village usually consists of three councillors, unless this number is increased to a higher odd number by local bylaw. The mayor is typically appointed from council unless the council passes a bylaw to have the mayor elected at-large.

Summer Villages

Summer villages are a form of government that was designed to meet the needs of part-time residents. Summer villages required at least 60 per cent of the land to have buildings used as dwellings. In a summer village, elections and annual meetings are required to be held in the summer. A citizen, as well as his or her spouse, who owns property in the summer village is entitled to vote in its election. A summer village is the only type of municipality where a person can vote twice in municipal elections: once in the summer village and once in the municipality where their permanent residence is located. In 1995, the provincial government made the decision that summer villages could no longer be created in Alberta.

Municipal Districts

Municipal districts include rural areas, as well as unincorporated communities such as hamlets and country residential subdivisions. Municipal districts usually elect one council member as the chief elected official or reeve, although a bylaw can be passed that enables the reeve to be elected at large. Municipal districts use a ward system to elect officials to council.

Prior to the introduction of the *Municipal Government Act* in 1995, there were also rural municipalities that used the word “county” in their names. The county structure of local government played the dual roles of municipal government and school board. When the legislation changed, all rural municipalities became municipal districts, but many former counties chose to retain the word “county” in their names. More recently, municipal districts are adopting the word “county” in their names.

Hamlets

Hamlets are found within municipal districts or specialized municipalities. The council of a municipal district can designate a small community that is within its boundaries to be a hamlet. A community can be a hamlet if it consists of five or more dwellings, has a name, boundaries that help identify the community and contains land that is used for non-residential purposes.



THINK ABOUT

Jasper and Banff are unique municipalities because they are located inside national parks, which are under federal jurisdiction. The *Rocky Mountain Park Act* of 1887 allowed for the creation of the townsite of Banff. In 1907, Jasper became Canada’s fifth national park, and the town of Jasper started to grow around the railway station. Today, management of these two townsites is provided under the *Municipal Government Act*. Banff was incorporated as a town in 1990 and Jasper as a specialized municipality in July 2001. The federal government retains control over some activities, such as planning and development. Management responsibilities for the areas surrounding these two townsites are conducted under the authority of an improvement district government structure.

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THINK ABOUT

Any municipality may also have municipal boards and committees. Some boards are mandatory, such as the subdivision development appeal board. Examples of municipal boards and committees include:

- Advisory committees
- Family and community support services boards
- Library boards
- Special events and economic development committees
- Youth councils.

Specialized Municipalities

Specialized municipalities are formed when the other forms of municipalities do not suitably meet the needs of its residents. Specialized municipalities may include those with both urban and rural characteristics in one municipality. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Strathcona County, the Municipality of Jasper and Mackenzie County are specialized municipalities.

Improvement Districts

Improvement districts are a form of local authority and not a municipality. The provincial government, through Alberta Municipal Affairs, is responsible for all functions of municipal government in improvement districts, including the levy and collection of taxes. The residents of an improvement district may elect representatives, who are subsequently appointed by the Minister, to an advisory council that assists in its administration. The formal power of a council rests with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but most power and responsibility has been delegated to improvement district councils. These councils, generally consisting of seven to nine members, guide the activities of the improvement district's manager and staff. Some improvement districts do not have an advisory council.

Five of the current seven improvement districts (IDs) in Alberta are located in national parks – ID No. 9 (Banff), ID No. 12 (Jasper), ID No. 4 (Waterton), ID No. 13 (Elk Island), and ID No. 24 (Wood Buffalo). The other two improvement districts are provincial parks – Kananaskis Improvement District (including Kananaskis Provincial Park), and ID No. 25 (Willmore Wilderness).

Special Areas

A special area is a form of local authority and not a municipality. The Special Areas Board is a unique government structure used in a rural area that covers approximately 2.1 million hectares in southeast Alberta. The board is responsible for the administration of the area and provision of all municipal services, as well as the leasing of public lands and operation of five community pastures. Sixty per cent of all lands in the special areas are public lands and are leased for grazing, cultivation or irrigation. The area has a very low population density. The chairperson of the board reports directly to Alberta Municipal Affairs.

The special areas are also involved in the Prairie Association for Water Management, which has membership extending from the City of Calgary to Kindersley, Saskatchewan. The association examines, in concert with government agencies, rural and urban needs and develops water resource plans and strategies.

Other Local Authorities

We often associate local governments with elected officials on our municipal councils. Appointed and elected boards in communities also play an important local governance role. Local boards have mandates to provide public services. Some or all of their members are elected by local residents in the same or similar fashion as municipal officials, usually at the same election. Regional health authorities are appointed. Regional school division officials are elected.

Métis Settlements

Alberta is the only province that has passed legislation specifically for Métis people. On November 1, 1990, the Government of Alberta proclaimed legislation that provides for a unique form of government on the Métis Settlements. The legislation was developed cooperatively by the Province of Alberta and the Alberta Federation of Métis Settlement Associations, which was the predecessor to the Métis Settlements General Council.

The legislation establishes the only Métis land base and the only form of legislated Métis government in Canada. It was created in an effort to accommodate Métis aspirations of securing their land base, gaining local autonomy and achieving self-sufficiency.

This legislation establishes the constitutional protection of settlement lands, the development of governance structures and systems, and provincial financial commitments. Eight settlements are established by the *Métis Settlements Act*. These are: Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine. Approximately 9 000 people live on the eight settlements.

On March 26, 1998, *the Métis Settlements Statutes Amendment Act* streamlined administrative processes, increased the effectiveness of government funding arrangements and recognized the settlements for the purposes of a number of provincial statutes.

The self-governance model developed by the Métis and Alberta is a unique “hub-and-spoke” model. As the hub in this model, the General Council deals with matters that affect the collective interests of the eight settlements and is comprised of the elected councillors of all the Métis Settlements and a four-person executive elected by the councillors. The executive officers, who must be settlement members, may attend and participate in General Council meetings but have no vote.

The General Council supports the eight settlement “spokes” by holding the land, making laws, administering funds for which it has legislated responsibility, and negotiating maximum benefits from oil and gas resources under settlement area lands. The General Council has the power to make policies, which have the same effect as laws, and provide rules for the governance of collective issues over many local issues.

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Each settlement is run by a five-person council that is elected by membership and headed by a chairperson selected by the council members. Elections are held every three years on the third Monday in October. Settlement councils can make bylaws, provided that they do not contravene any provincial law or General Council policies. Bylaws must be approved by the members of the settlement. Settlement councils assume responsibility for a range of municipal and social functions – the latter expanding their role beyond the “municipal” functions of typical local governments in Alberta. This broad scope means that in addition to municipal concerns such as streets, water, sewer and bylaws, settlement councils are responsible for land allocation, membership, housing, business, economic development, culture and other activities.

First Nations Reserves

A First Nations reserve is not a part of any municipality. Through the *British North America Act (1867)*, the federal government has exclusive legislative authority on matters related to Aboriginal peoples and reserves.