

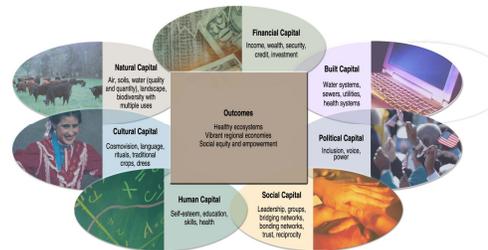
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# 2010 Community Assessment

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## Study of a Community



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## Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

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# **A Community Assessment of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota: 2010**

Prepared by students in the  
Community Assessment course (SOC 404/604)  
North Dakota State University, Fargo

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Prepared for  
City of  
Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

December 2010

We would like to offer a thanks to the city of Pelican Rapids for their welcoming hospitality as our class explored, photographed, interviewed, participated in, and became patrons of your community. We thoroughly enjoyed this project and our time in your community. You will see many of us again as we seek out events and activities that we learned about in this process.

We would like to extend a special thanks to our the advisory board that gave many hours of their time to the review, meeting, and guidance of our class through your community. It was an honor to meet and work with you.

Thank you to Ben Woessner, Don Solga, Deb Wanek and Dianne Kimm.

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## Executive Summary

This assessment is essentially a developmental guide addressing Pelican Rapids, in hopes to emphasize and further acknowledge all social, economic and physical attributes that encompass this particular community. Ideally, publishing this blueprint will generate continued awareness and a historical baseline to be referenced for future evaluations and revisions. Discovering the balance between assets versus challenges, requires further study into strategic planning. Strategic Planning is “fundamentally concerned with the allocation of resources (time, money, energy, facilities, and equipment) to achieve goals and objectives (“City Dept,” 2010). Provided the benefits outweigh any risks, this is an implication to see all possible resolutions attain full potential, promoting community loyalty and betterment.

- Defining the Community
- Research Methods
- Cultural Capital
- Human Capital
- Social Capital
- Political Capital
- Financial Capital
- Built Capital
- Governments
- Local Development Organizations

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# 2010 Community Assessment

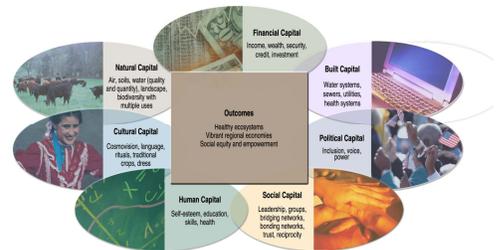
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## Chapter

# 1

## Defining a Community



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## Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

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## **Chapter One**

### **Defining a Community**

The purpose of the community research project is to define the community of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota through an asset-based assessment. Pelican Rapids, Minnesota is a small rural/farming community in western Minnesota, known for the world's largest pelican statue built in 1957 (Andrews, 1997). The city is located 30 miles west of Fargo, North Dakota and 30 miles north of Fergus Falls, Minnesota. The city is named Pelican Rapids for its diverse wildlife and the city enjoys a sizable lake which contributes to the fish and gaming industry. Multiple resort lakes share the area. The Pelican River runs directly through the city, which creates a strong identity in the downtown district.

#### **Population and History**

The Census Bureau will be publishing a new census in December 2010, with a projected estimate that the population will increase from the current population, which is 2,374 ("American Fact Finder," 2010). "The name Pelican is spelled Shada by the Ojibwe and Henry W. Longfellow after his song of Hiawatha" ("A Guide to," 2010). According to the official city of Pelican Rapids website, the community was incorporated on December 10, 1883. The first settlers came to Pelican Rapids in 1868 to establish trading posts to serve the local residents. After which the area became inhabited (Andrews, 1997).

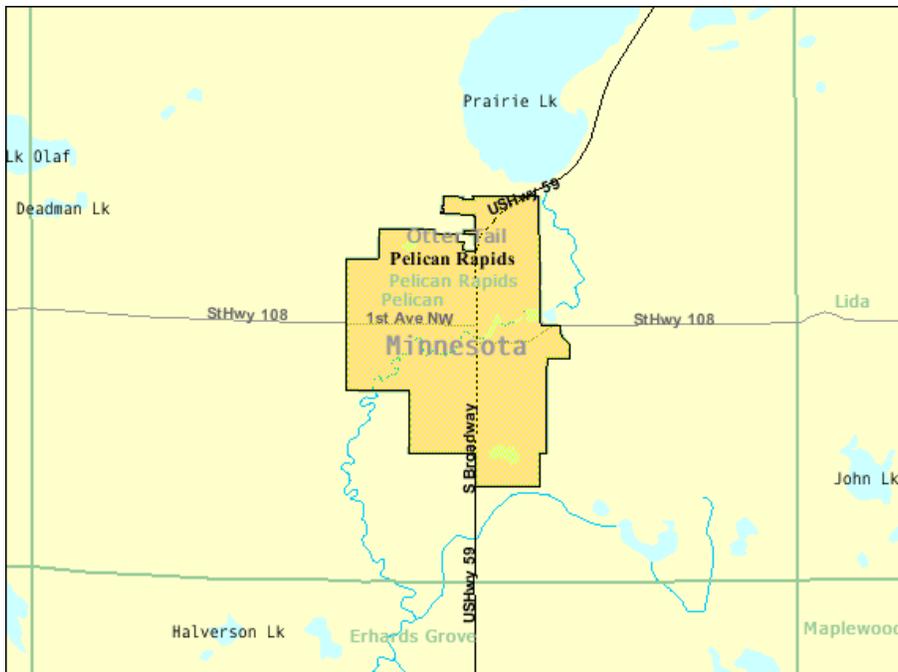
#### **Boundaries**

Pelican Rapids city is located within Ottertail County, Minnesota. What constitutes the rural boundaries of Ottertail County? The citizens describe the regional boundary as entitled by the trade route throughout the history of the northern frontier and also the water resources. The rural boundary can be defined in the 'community to place' and the 'community of interest'. The rural community is a part of the local interactions and geo-spatial area with a shared life or aggregate. Otter Tail county, which is comprised of twenty-two cities and fifty-two townships, constitutes a multicounty district ("County of Ottertail," 2001). The school district expands across the border townships of StarLake, Friberg, Elizabeth, and Tansem ("Office of geographic," 2008). The defining boundaries of Pelican Rapids as a city is made up of the district suffix and zip code.



**Map 1.1: Minnesota Counties**

Source: <http://www.presentationmall.com>



**Map 1.2: Pelican Rapids, Minnesota**

Source: <http://www.citydata.com>

## **Community Assets**

The authors of this report conducted a community assessment using the Community Capitals Framework. This method allows the authors to catalog resources by category. The authors of the assessment have conducted research using reconnaissance, secondary data review of existing documents, interviews, and observation. Each of the chapter topics are highlighted below. The first chapter looked at how the community of Pelican Rapids, MN is defined, not only geographically, but also by its residents. Chapter 2 discusses the various methods used to obtain and analyze data. In chapter 3, the cultural capital highlights, including the history of the community, its cultural diversity, and its spiritual capital. Chapter 4 looks at the natural capital of the community focusing on the strengths and challenges of the environment. Chapter 5 examines the population of Pelican Rapids and highlights its human capital. In chapter 6, the social capital of the community is focused on by looking at the organizations and network formation of the population. The political capital, to include community stratification, will be analyzed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 will look at the economic base and levels of income which make up the financial capital of Pelican Rapids. The built capital, made up of local infrastructure, housing, and the health care system, will be discussed in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 focuses on the many aspects of government in the community to include: the local government, police services, emergency management, and parks and recreation. The community assessment concludes with a look at the local development organizations in Chapter 11.

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# 2010 Community Assessment

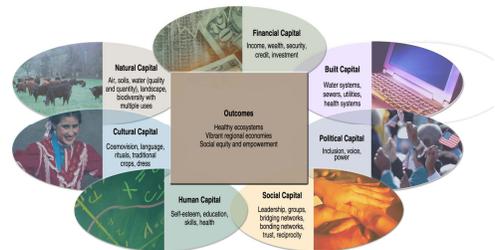
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## Chapter

# 2

## Research Methods



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# Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Methods**

In this chapter, key concepts will be discussed regarding the research techniques used in identifying each capital theory. For this project a triangulation, or mixed methodology was used in order to enhance data and information found in our assessment of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota. Specifically speaking; direct examinations, photographic records, interviews, participant observations, statistical analysis, as well as documented and secondary research was utilized in appraising a synopsis of the city. A better understanding of each approach is as follows:

#### **Direct Examination**

First hand impressions were firm, engaging in an ethnographic scheme titled “Windshield Reconnaissance”. Trips to the community made by individuals of the class were recorded with sightings and observations as to what definitively defined Pelican Rapids. During these visits, the city limits acted as boundaries to what was being subjected to research, the cultural aspects blatantly laid before us in neighborhoods and streets, while infrastructures and physical attributes promoted excitement to further study the area. Photographs were taken and a collage of the society’s daily life was collected, embellishing the businesses and landscapes typical in a relatively small town. Surveillance of all things discussed was optimistically appraised as finding the exact constructive elements that could further bring recognition to the area. Detection of certain vicinities required permission and help in deciphering what the valuable characteristics were and although public records indicated and answered many of our questions, an advisory committee was established in regards to aiding this publication. These individuals include: Don Solga; city administrator, Deb Wanik; school superintendent, Diane Kimm; affiliated with Lutheran Social Services, Ben Woesner; Mayor and Johanna Christianson; director of the Diversity Council.

In an attempt to fully comprehend Pelican Rapids future goals and what they wish to see revolutionized, it is crucial to grasp the communities’ awareness and self identification as to what positive qualities they believe they possess and essentially have to offer. Some information was gathered from citizens in meetings and councils, where pride was evident and room for improvement was acknowledged. Participant observations were discovered in departments of authority and committee conventions. An example of this method would be those students who sat in on Pelican Rapids City Council meeting.

#### **Photographic Records**

A collection of photos were taken by students between September and December 2010. A rough estimate being a few hundred snapshots were captured and selected in hopes of portraying or illustrating sedentary life as well as the hustle and bustle of every day activity. Distinguished photographs used or found elsewhere have been cited and chosen upon their relation to the conditioned chapter.

#### **Interviews**

In publishing this review, it was crucial to provide an accurate account of all possible resources exercised in obtaining an outline for additional inquisition. Students attempted to meet or contact

individuals that would provide descriptive opinions and critiques as well as persons with instructive or knowledgeable narrations of Pelican Rapids. A history of experience was gathered in a cross-section of the community. At random selection, diverse ages, ethnic backgrounds, gender and socioeconomic groupings were consulted. Obliging citizens, such as the mayor, members of the city commission, the cities' auditor, Parks and Recreation directors, business owners, bankers, public officials, health administrators, clergy affiliates, school superintendents, the librarian, and other volunteer representatives of the community significantly assisted all chapters of this analysis.

The procedure for interviewing was well reflected, making sure our questions were comprehensible and drafted in advance. Any matter discussed was controlled, noted, typed and safeguarded to ensure confidentiality. An effort to collect a broad range of records was ideal to guarantee the voice of all residents is heard equally with faithful precision.

### **Participant Observation**

Participant observation takes place when the examiner monitors the daily or formal practices of the community and contributes as a member of the given society; engaging and listening to questions and or concerns in a set environment. This routine was applied while attending meetings for different departments or corporations in Pelican Rapids. Permission was granted to sit in on these conferences and written memorandums were allowed in order to recall agendas and propositions that would provide criteria for up-coming chapters of this assessment.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Statistical Analysis is defined as a “collection, examination, summarization, manipulation, and interpretation of quantitative data to discover its underlying causes, patterns, relationships, and trends” (Luthra, 2007). This is the case in our assessment as numerous accounts of research was obtained through many different manners and was interpreted for each specified capital.

### **Documentary Data**

Documentary data is superlative in organizing an overview of what is occurring and yet to be revealed in the community. Documents such as the *Pelican Rapids Press*, *Highline Notes*, promotional pamphlets, organizational leaflets and literature, bulletin archives, website essays, service brochures as well as zoning and topographical maps provided credentials that are imperative to recognizing chronological and transpiring elements in the district.

### **Secondary Data**

Another category utilized in this collaboration is secondary data. This is information obtained from research conducted for a purpose other than our particular assessment. Credit is cited among the literature, providing sources for further possible inquiries. Websites were crucial and relied upon in presenting accurate depictions and truths. Among those used; U.S Census Bureau, U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), are determined to be updated annually or at least on a measurable, conceivable time line, assisting developers, or us students in this instance, with current up-to-date facts and figures. Government web pages present population estimates and longitudinal revisions that contributed to demographic

information while local divisions of wildlife and game supported data collected from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

### **Methodological Issues**

Upon starting this project, it was central to our study that we knew what conventional form of research we would be conducting. John W. Creswell, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Lincoln- Nebraska, has spent thousands of hours focusing on contents of blueprints and authored one book in particular entitled *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. This provides a framework or process in compositional assessments that delineate each traditional form, while emerging reflections on theories of each. In this literature mixed methods is defined as:

an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative [exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem] and quantitative [means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables] forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

With all of these mixed methods used, dilemmas were sure to arise. As a team, we prepared for prompt and readily available solutions should one occur. Each form or process was discussed in class and different situations were dissected making certain that protocol was followed should a predicament surface. Prior to research conducted such as interviews and conversations, questions were summarized and arranged to capitalize on the responses collected while making sure individuals time and privacy was not taken advantage of. Interferences of research list varying potential problems such as technological issues, lack of available information, information overload and possible lack or inefficient cooperation.

Each methodology has its own concern and course of action that should be addressed, linking legal and ethical issues to the means of who, what, where, why, when and how research was obtained. Obligations to individuals are a fundamental practice that must not be overlooked.

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues were constantly addressed by the class. Mandatory certification was achieved by each student involved in this project. This meant completion of the North Dakota State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on-line official recognition. Retrieving this website, NDSU states:

Research with human subjects is conducted in accordance with the regulations of the Dept. of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other applicable agencies [Policy # 345]...This is directed to protect the rights, safety, and welfare of all individuals participating in NDSU research projects...These protections ensure that: risks to participants are minimized, risks are reasonable in relation to benefits, recruitment procedures are fair, subjects are sufficiently informed and able to make a voluntary choice, their privacy and confidentiality are respected and extra protections are in place for vulnerable groups (NDSU, 2010).

There were two programs offering training through the IRB. One was offered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the other is by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). The IRB necessitates all members involved in the research maintain current knowledge of ethical principles and policies related to human subjects. Both tutorials have a requirement that applies to all who interact or intervene with participants, or deal with identifiable data such as investigators, co-investigators, personnel, team members and their assistants, as well as any outside source committed to the collaboration of such research.

Therefore, as the class received certified diplomas, research resumed. Informed consent was obtained, making it public knowledge while individuals knew their statements could be used in publications, their names and personal contact information would not. A description of the assessment, the purpose and any positive or negative effects involved with the persons or community were reviewed and made known. Any individual considered vulnerable (children, elderly, handicapped, and so on.) was to be interviewed with extreme care and caution. In our specific study, children were left out completely to eliminate the possibility of unapproved parental consent from a person under the age of 18. The identity of all informants was kept confidential with the exception of those individuals quoted who are in positions of authority and are speaking in official capacity. Those who remain anonymous spoke at voluntary will and were told of any risks or benefits that would likely impact the community. It was again reiterated that all names and identities would be kept classified.

All data acquired was kept in a safe location, as well as any questions or concerns that were to be directed at our primary investigator Dr. Gary Goreham.

Another issue discussed was plagiarism. This is defined as the “stealing of words and/or ideas of another person and presenting them as one's own [It] is an academic and moral infringement, but not a legal one unless it amounts to a copyright violation” (Luthra, 2007). It should be stated that this is highly unacceptable and has grounds for expulsion at NDSU. Therefore all notes, research, and data are cited with reference to the author and location in which it was obtained.

Authors:

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# 2010 Community Assessment

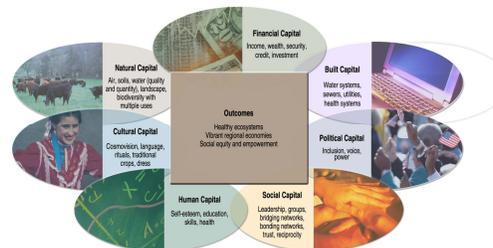
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## Chapter

# 3

## Cultural Capital



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## Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

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## Chapter Three Cultural Capital

In their book *Rural Communities: Legacy & Change*, Jan and Cornelia Flora define cultural capital as including “values and approaches to life that have both economic and noneconomic implications.” (Flora & Flora, 2008) In this chapter we will explore the different aspects of cultural capital such as community history, demographic data such as ethnicity and gender, spiritual capital, and we will examine their cultural identity.

### Community History

Pelican Rapids is situated in the center of the ancient Glacial Lake Pelican. It was first settled in 1868 as a trading post by the British Northwestern Company in an effort to establish trading relationships with the Ojibwe Indians living in the area.

#### The Rapids

The rapids which once powered the R.L. Frazee Mill have been the center of town since 1878.



**Photograph 3.1 Pete the Pelican**

*Source: City-Data.com*

#### The Minnesota Woman

One of the most fascinating events in Pelican Rapids history was the discovery of the oldest hominid skeleton in North America, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1931. According to the Otter Tail County website a highway department crew was at work leveling a stretch of U.S. Highway 59 when a crew member who had been following the grader blade noticed something odd. Stopping for a closer look, he was shocked to see empty eye socket of a human skull peering up at him.

Along with the remains were discovered a conch shell pendant and an elk's horn dagger. The remains were identified by Dr. Albert Jenks from the University of Minnesota as a mature female from as far back as 10,000 years ago.



**Photograph 3.2 Minnesota Woman Marker**  
Photograph by Ottertail County Historical Society

### Maplewood State Park

#### Camp Noah

Camp Noah began as a response to the massive flooding in the Red River Valley in northern Minnesota and North Dakota in 1997. Since then, Camp Noah has matured into a nationally recognized program for children affected by natural and human-caused disasters. Each subsequent summer the Camp Noah program has funded, supported and coordinated hundreds of camps in dozens of locations across the United States with the help of a diverse group of faithful partners. In the last four years Camp Noah has held 167 camps, served 7220 children and youth and over 3080 volunteers in 17 different states (“Our History,” n.d.).

#### **Significant Events**

1900: Fire destroys Great Northern Roundhouse and fire Engine #36 which was parked inside

1903: First graduating class of Pelican Rapids High School, composed of only two students.

1951: Pelican Valley Medical Center opened its doors

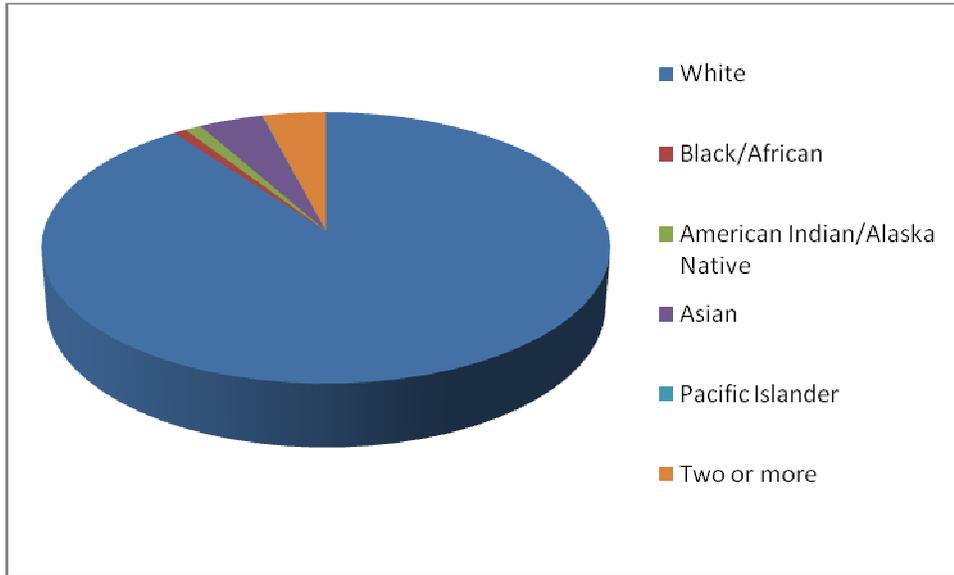
1957: World's Largest Pelican erected near the water fall

April 12, 1956: West Central Turkeys, Inc. was established.

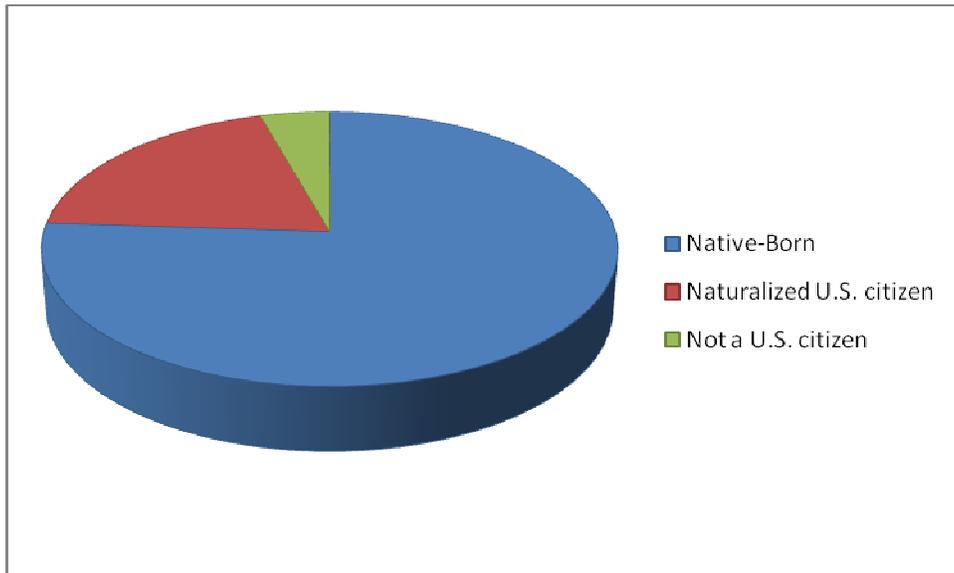
January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1982: Wind-chill of -100 degrees Fahrenheit marks the coldest winter of the century

### Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the majority of racial/ethnic composition of Pelican Rapids is White and the breakdown of its native born residents are primarily of European descent; Norwegian (34.1%), German (24.2%), Swedish (7.9%), English (4.4%), Irish (4.4%), other (2.1%).



**Figure 3.1 Pelican Rapids' Racial/Ethnic Breakdown**  
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Summary File 1*



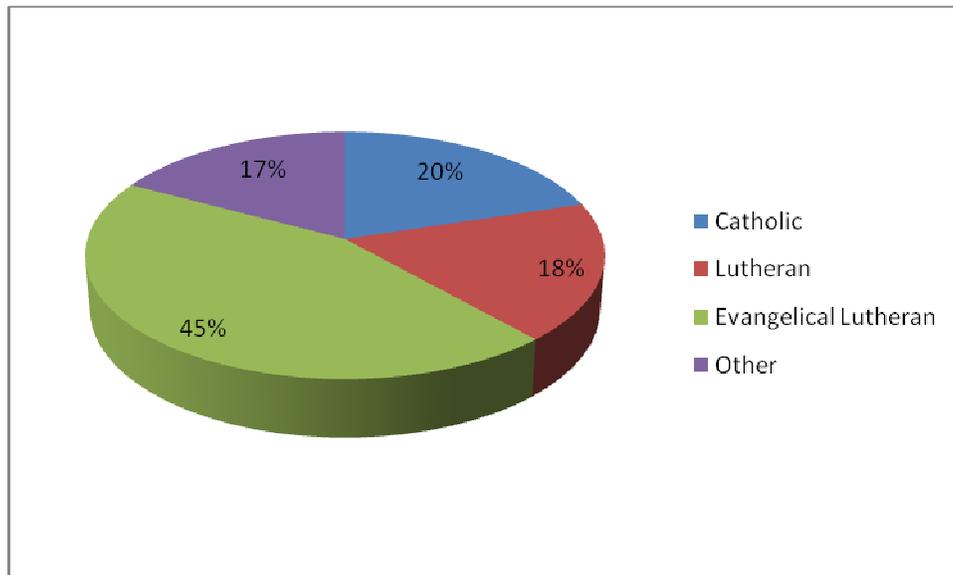
**Figure 3.2 Pelican Rapids' Citizenship Data**  
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3)*

## Spiritual Capital

A definition: A concept that quantifies the value of individuals, groups and society of spiritual, moral and psychological beliefs and practices.

Some of the faith groups represented in Pelican Rapids include; Lutheran, Evangelical Free, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, as well as Muslim residents from Bosnia, Kurdistan, and Somalia.

The faith groups represented in Pelican Rapids include



**Figure 3.3 Pelican Rapids' Religious Affiliations**

*Source: City-Data.com*

Evangelical Lutheran Calvary Evangelical Free Church, Assembly of God,

Catholic Saint Leonard's Catholic Church

Lutheran Trinity Lutheran, Zion Lutheran,

Islam Gar Gar Shop is Pelican Rapids source for Halal meat, but it also has a room in the back that doubles as a mosque for Pelican Rapids' Muslim residents.

## Cultural Capital and Challenges

Multicultural Diversity Committee ~ Johanna Christianson interview

1. How sensitive is the issue of racial and ethnic relations in your community?
2. What racial/ethnic reconciliation steps have been taken in Pelican Rapids?
3. What leadership roles are held by minorities and women?

4. What kinds of responses have you seen from Pelican Rapids natives towards the newcomers?
5. How active are the various faith groups in the life of the community?
  - a. To what degree do they see involvement in public ministry as part of their groups' mission?
6. What cultural conflicts have occurred (or are occurring) in the community?
  - a. What cultural groups are vying for cultural domination/hegemony?
  - b. How is conflict evident?
7. Have you noticed one ethnic group having an easier (or very difficult) time adapting to their new environment?
  - a. Why do you think one group may be having an easier (or more difficult) time adapting?
8. What types of outreach does the multi-cultural committee offer?
  - a. What groups seem to be more involved in the community than others?
  - b. Why do think that is?

## Cultural Capital

### Cultural Identity

### Ethnic Culture

Over the last few decades, Pelican Rapids has become a very diverse community due to immigration and refugee resettlement. Some of the groups represented are:

- Somali
- Bosnian
- Sudanese
- Vietnamese
- Kurdish
- Northern European (German, Irish, Swedish, Norwegian)
- Latino

Las Monarcas Market, Gar Gar Shop Halal Market



**Photograph 3.3 Las Monarcas Market #2**

*Photograph by Sophia Yohannes-Smadi*

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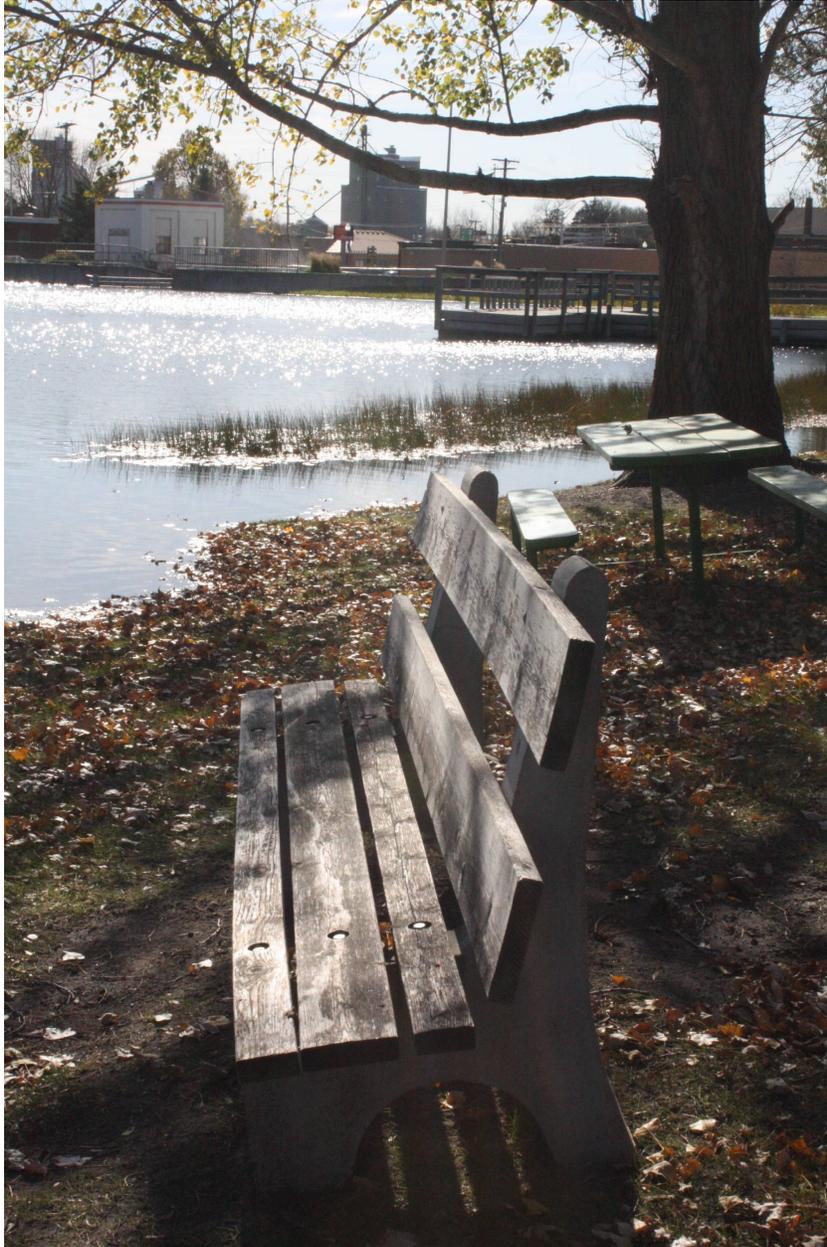
Sophia Yohannes

Megan Shea

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# 2010 Community Assessment

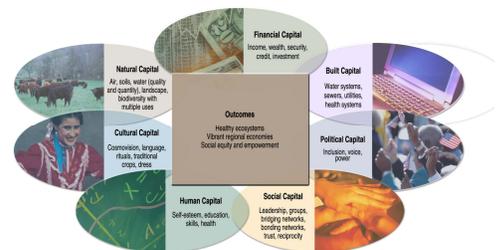
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## Chapter

# 4

## Natural Capital



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# Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

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## Chapter 4 Natural Capital

This chapter highlights the natural capital of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota. Flora and Flora, defines Natural Capital as the “landscape, air, water, soil, and biodiversity of both plants and animals” (Flora, & Flora, 2008). According to Flora and Flora, Natural Capital "is the base on which all capitals depend since it can be consumed or extracted for immediate profit, or it can be a continuing resource for communities of place" (Flora, & Flora, 2008). This chapter defines the unique Natural Capital attributes for Pelican Rapids. The characteristics for Pelican Rapids are gathered through reference material, documents, interviews, site visits, and observation.

The topics highlighted in this chapter include the background of the geological and climatology context, the definitions of the supporting bio-system, the inventories of land use, soils and topography, and the physical resources as they are used today. The chapter concludes with the resulting findings of the strengths and challenges particular to natural capital in Pelican Rapids.

### Background

When entering the city of Pelican Rapids, it is evident the city is nestled in rolling hills, and framed by lake country, trees, and grasslands. (see photograph 4.1) Immigrants who settled this part of the country felt comfortable and at-home with the surrounding rivers, hills, and trees. These characteristics led to the original settlement by white settlers in order to establish trading posts with the Native Americans. The publication, *Pelican Rapids Centennial 1883-1983, A Century at the Rapids* details the exchange and settlement of the land based on trees, rapids, natural tree clearings and pelicans. Trees were used by the immigrants and new settlers to create buildings and natural clearings were used to begin farming corn and wheat. The power of the rapids was used for the flour mill, which was established in 1878.



**Photograph 4.1 City Welcome Sign Surrounded by Trees**  
*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

### Geological Context

The physical location of the city is in a transitional ecosystem (transitioning between prairie lands, woodlands, and lake area) the settlement is rich with bio-diversity which creates a truly unique setting. For instance, the river, and surface waters are of key importance to the settlement of the industry and tourism economies. The soils and river bed are rich in nutrients for farmland, and the grass lands are valuable wildlife habitat for species diversification, including bird migration. Seen in the photographed map (photograph 4.2), the location of Pelican Rapids is located at the cross of the Prairie Parkland and Eastern Broadleaf Forest Ecosystems, as defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

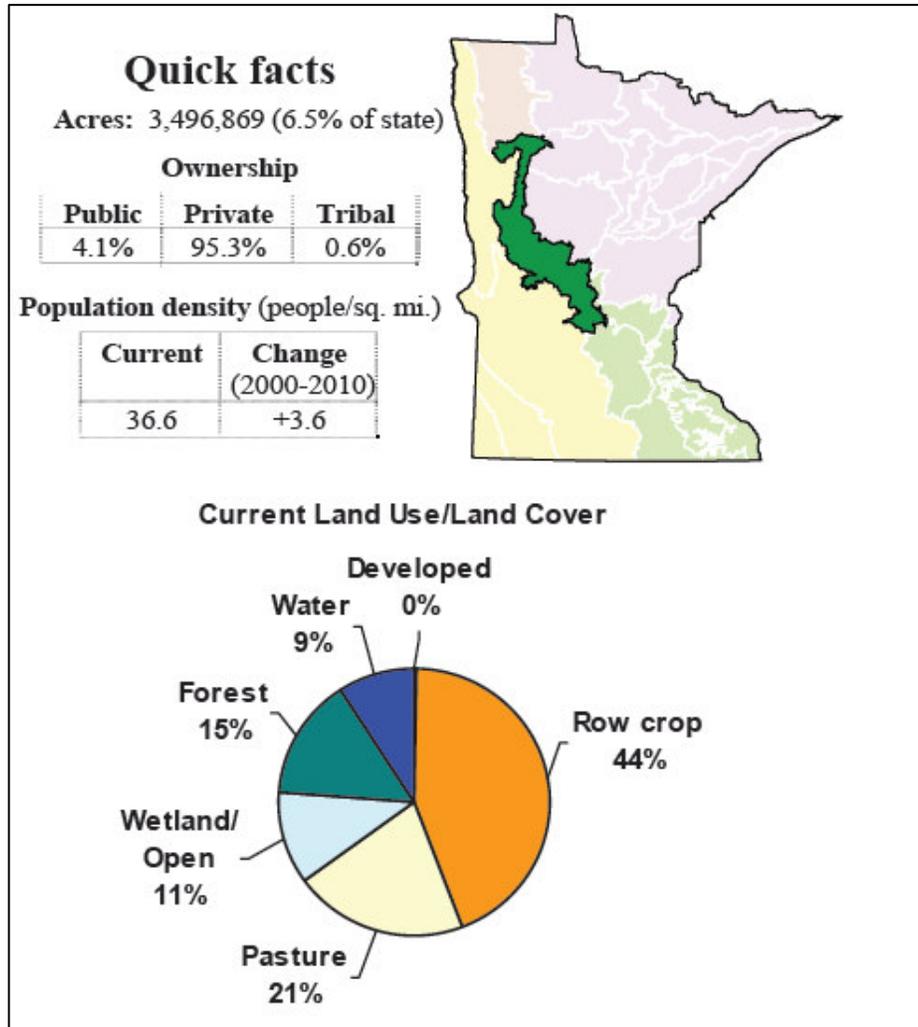


**Photograph 4.2 Interpretative Signage Located in Downtown**

*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), further divides the ecosystems into subsections. The majority of Ottertail Township (including Pelican Rapids) is within the Harwood Hills Subsection. The DNR has further defined and inventoried this land. Details can be found in the report, *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2006. Figure 4.1 summarizes the land inventories to include, size of acreage, ownership, and land cover. The majority of

the landownership is privately held. The majority of the land is in agriculture row crop farming. The population density is 36.6 people per square mile. 35% of the land is less aggressively managed by human, and is characterized as, forest, wetland or open, and water.



**Figure 4.1 Land Characteristics of the Harwood Hills Ecosystem.**

Source: Reprinted from *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Division of Ecological Services, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2006

Climate

The weather in Pelican Rapids varies greatly by season. The weather in this region can partially attribute to the success of the turkey industry as understood in discussions with local residents and leaders. The mild summers and the cold seasons work with the hatching cycles of turkeys.

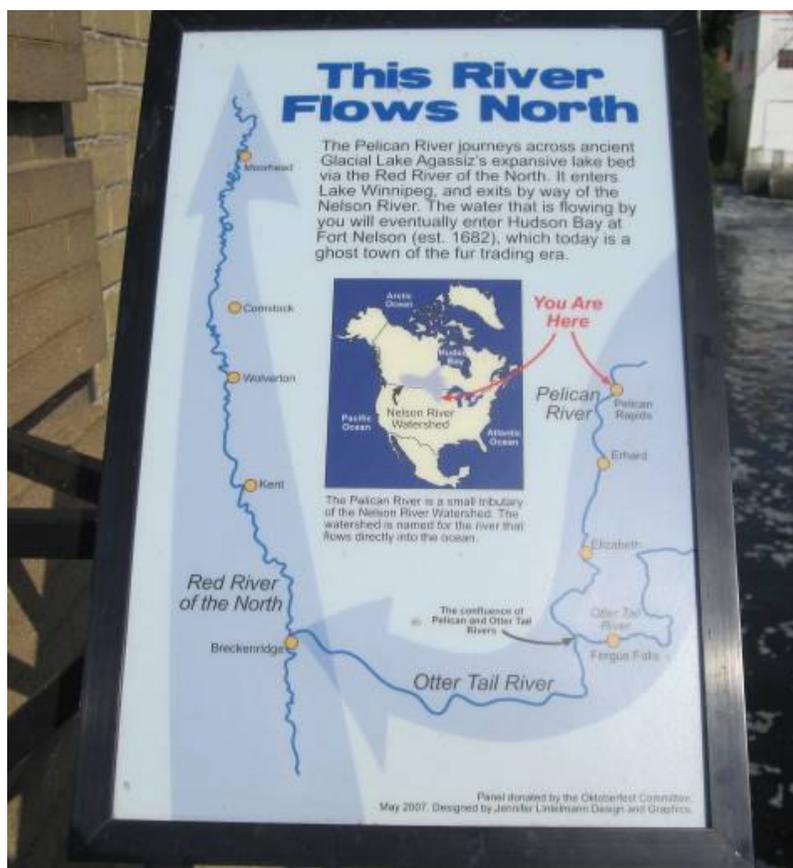
To summarize the weather patterns, in the summer, average temperature is around 81 degrees Fahrenheit, whereas in the winter the average is around -4.5 degrees Fahrenheit. There also tends to be a

great change in temperature from day to night during the summer. They often experience a chilling drop of 22 degrees after the sun sets. The highest temperature on record is 105 degrees in 1976. While the coldest recorded temperature occurred in 1977 at -39 degrees. (www.weather.com) The annual precipitation average at Pelican Rapids is 23.75 Inches. The rainfall is equally distributed year round, with June often being the wettest month a year with 4.08 inches respectively. (Weather Almanac, 2010).

The climate in Pelican Rapids is defined as humid continental. This type of climate is the climate for Minnesota, most of Wisconsin and the eastern half of the Dakotas. This climate is marked by its cold, sometimes severely cold, winters and its warm to hot summers.

### Hydrology

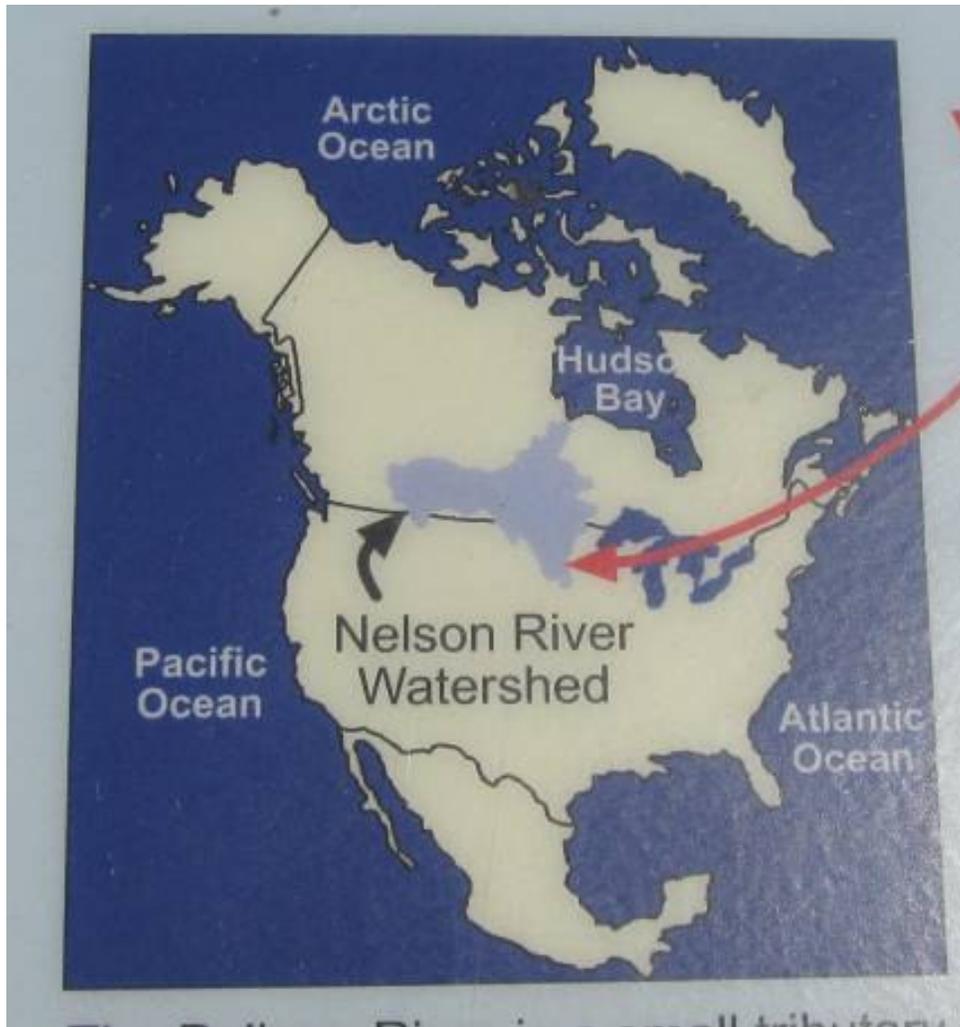
The city of Pelican Rapids is located within the Red River Basin. Photographs 4.3 and 4.4 show the relationship of Pelican Rapids to the entire Red River Basin, the Nelson Watershed and the area rivers. The red arrows on the photographed maps show the location of Pelican Rapids.



**Photograph 4.3 Interpretative Signage of Rivers Located in Downtown**

*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

These photographs are representative of the interpretative signage found in downtown Pelican Rapids. The complexity of the hydrology of the region can be seen on these maps. (As a side note, a visitor to Pelican Rapids can easily find this signage by walking through the downtown parks and can learn about the unique contextual location of Pelican Rapids.)



**Photograph 4.4 Interpretative Signage of Rivers Located in Downtown**

*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

In Otter Tail County itself there are 1,048 lakes. Lake Lida is the biggest close lake to Pelican Rapids. Covering over 6,000 acres Lake Lida is one of the biggest lakes in the area. (Photograph 4.5) There are several other smaller lakes quite close to Pelican Rapids (Lakes of Ottertail County, 2010).



**Photograph 4.5 Aerial view of Lake Lida.**

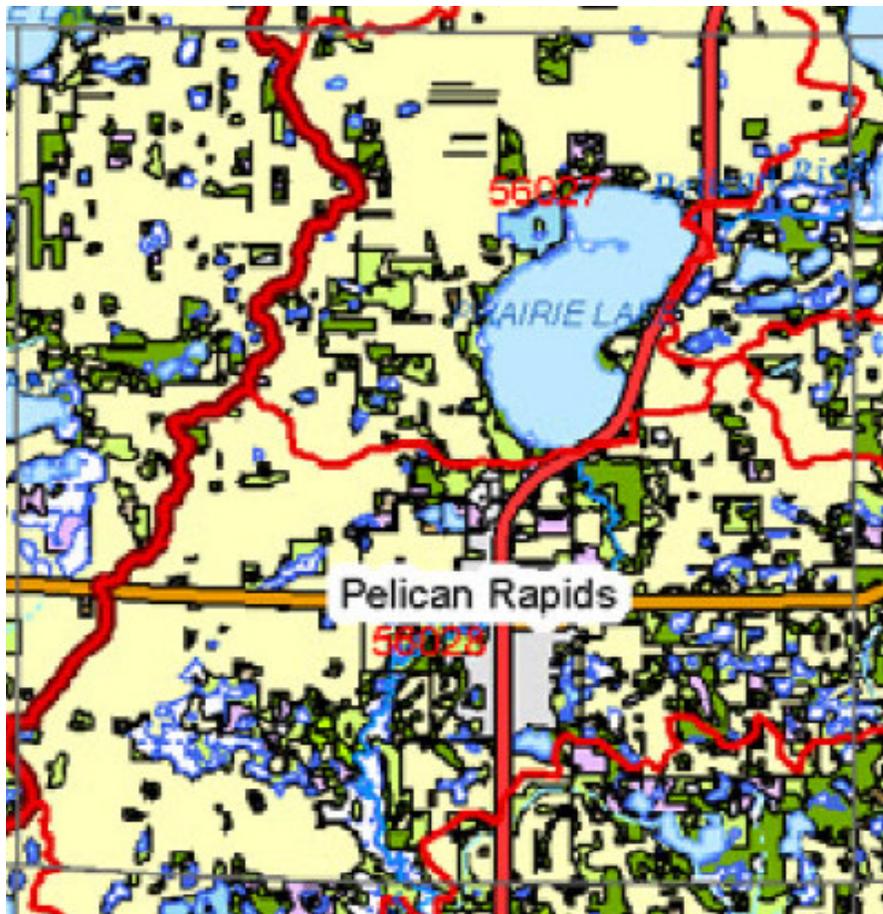
*Source: <http://lakelidahome.com/index.html>*

### **Land Inventories**

Ottertail County, Minnesota has inventoried the land characteristics in the county. The maps in the following sections present the Land Use, Soils, and Steep Slopes as inventoried in Pelican Rapids. These are presented so as to understand the unique characteristics to this community's location.

#### **Land Use**

Map 4.2, Land Use Map, delineates the city limits and the spatial relationship with Prairie Lake and North Lida Lake. This map also describes the land cover of the city and surrounding area. Compared to the rest of the county, less than 10% of the land area is designated as woodland. Primarily the land within the watershed is cultivated land, with the limits of Pelican Rapids indicated as Urban or Industrial. The open water, wetlands, rivers and creeks are the only depicted land use that are considered natural features not actively managed by humans.

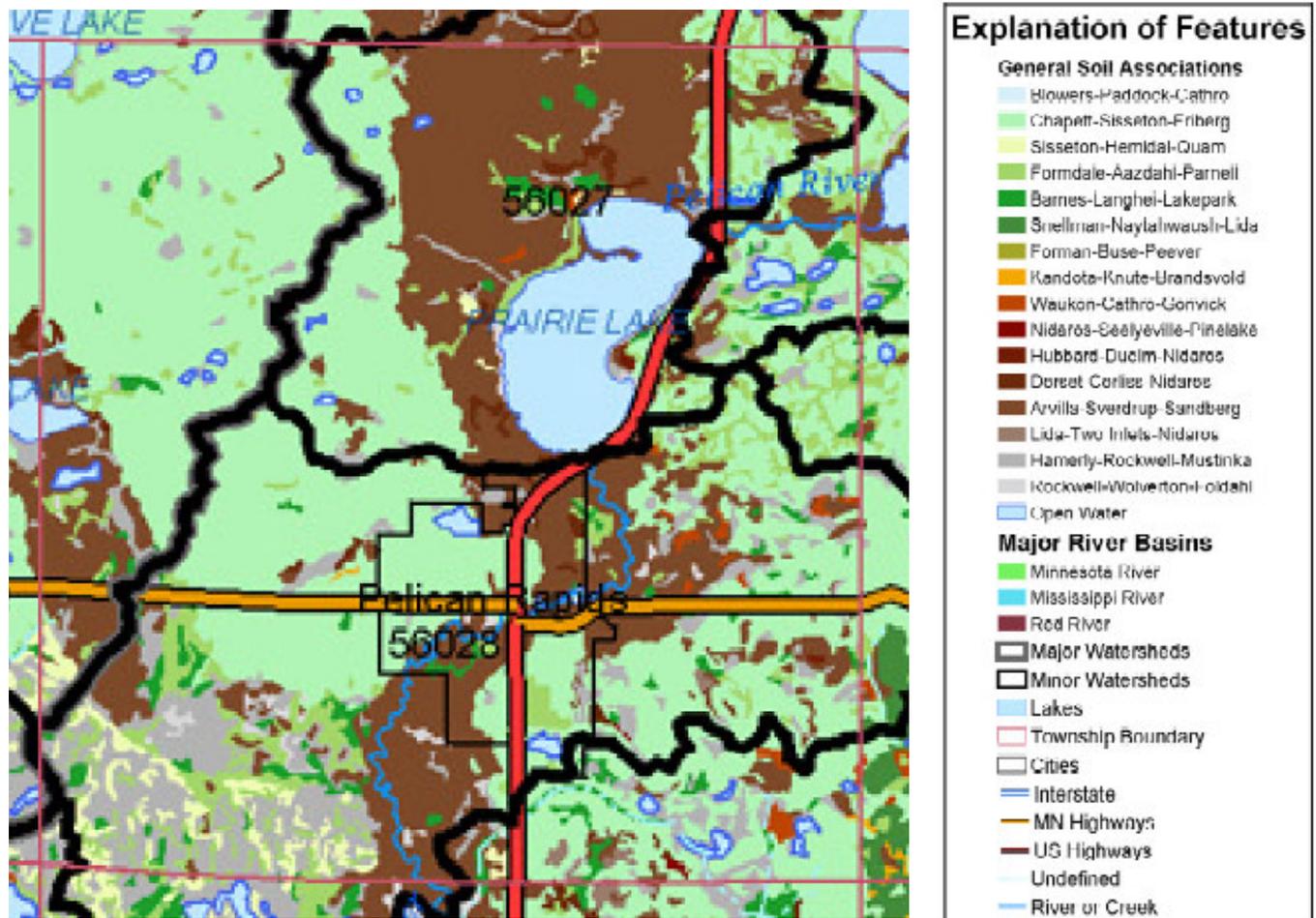


**Map 4.2 Land Use Map**

*Source: Excerpt of Ottertail County Land Use Map (1989)*

Soils Map

There are two dominant soil associations within Pelican Rapids city limits (Map 4.3). These are the Arvillis-Sverfrop -Sandberg soil association (brown color) and the Chapeff-Sisseton-Friberg Soil Association (aqua color). The Arvillis-Sverdrop-Sandberg soil association follows the Pelican River alignment, indicating the river valley’s alluvial soils and dividing the city almost in half.

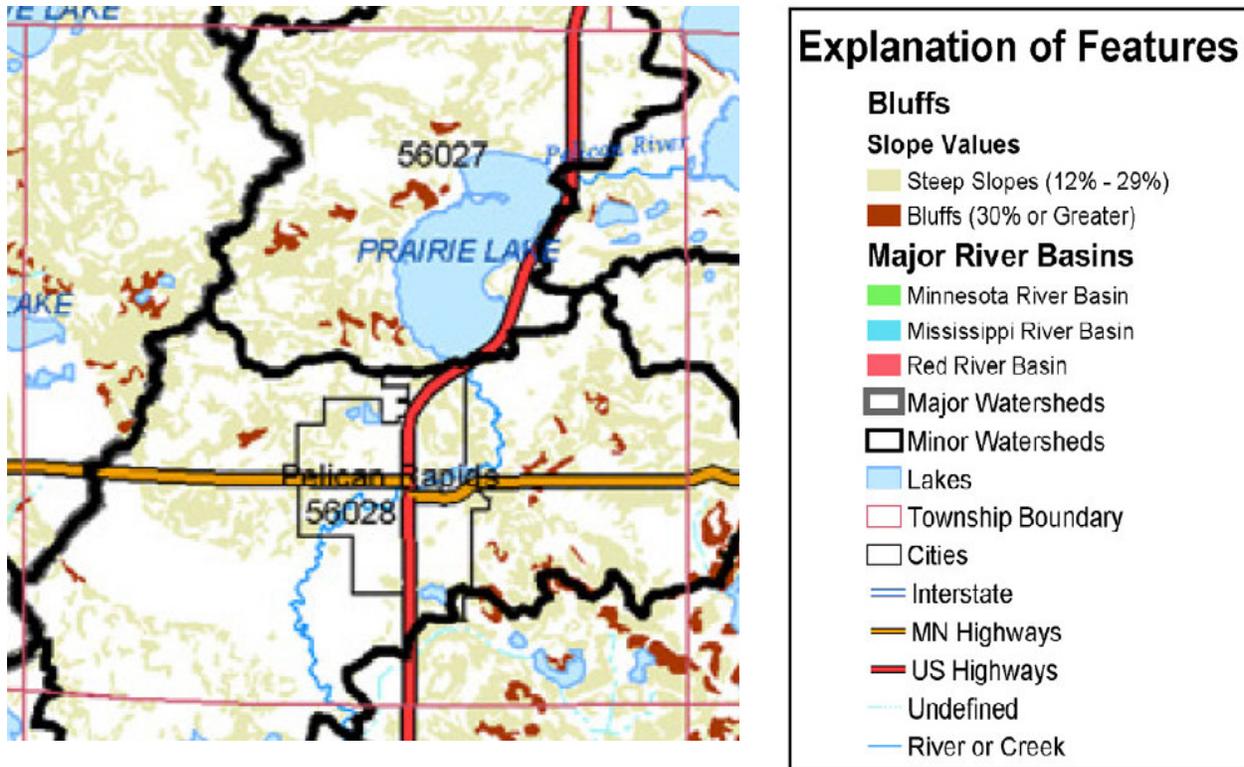


**Map 4.3 Soil Association Map**

*Source: Excerpt of the Ottertail County General Soil Type Association Map, based on the 1994 SSURGO Soil Survey*

Steep Slopes Map

Figure 4.4, indicate the steep slopes within city limits. This is important in order to identify appropriate locations for utilities and various built infrastructure. The map indicates that slopes of 12-29% can be found in the northeast and northwest borders of the city limits. These steep slopes delineate the Pelican River bed within the immediate watershed. The steep slopes are not compatible with farmland, but are compatible with species diversifications, especially wildlife habitat. Particularly to the steep slopes area of the city, the location of the water tower, the turkey plant, the cemetery, and the golf course can be found. The top sides of these slopes are conducive to these land uses.



**Figure 4.4 Bluff Locations and Steep Slope Map**

*Source: Excerpt of the Ottertail County based on the 1994 SSURGO Soil Survey*

### **Current Conditions**

The following section describes the physical activities and land uses that have are dependent on the natural resources within Pelican Rapids. A brief summary is provided about the park system and open space, and activities attributed to tourism to include birding, fishing snowmobiling, and bicycling. A visit to the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center, the State of Minnesota's Tourism organizations, and individual activity organizations provide addition detail about these resources.

#### Parks and Open Space

One resource found in Pelican Rapids is the Pelican River. The Pelican River flows right through the downtown area and is a major tourist spot with Pete the Pelican. Pete, the World's Largest Pelican, stands 15 ½ feet and is over 50 years old (Photograph 4.6). In the downtown area there is Mill Pond Dam, which creates a rapid like feature and has become a popular fishing spot.



**Photograph 4.6 Pelican Pete and Pelican River**

*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

There are four parks throughout the city of Pelican Rapids. Sherin Park and E. L. Peterson Park border the Pelican River just above the dam. E. L. Peterson Park is on the north side of the river and has a fishing pier as well as a large picnic shelter and a playground. Sherin Park, which is connected to E. L. Peterson Park by the large suspension bridge that spans the river, has camping spaces, walking trails, a covered pavilion and a somewhat smaller playground. (Photograph 4.7) These camping spaces were all full the first time we had visited, but had emptied later as the traditional camping season had ended. There also are places for fishing from along the shore of the river. The third park, Thompson Memorial Park is right beside the first two and could be viewed as an expansion of the two larger parks. Thompson Memorial Park has another playground as well as a soccer field. The fourth park is currently in the last phases of construction. Veteran's Memorial Park is located on the west side of downtown, near the library. This park has a few benches and picnic tables as well as some trees and flowers. This park is geared to be more of a quiet lunch area while still remaining in downtown. ("Lakes and Lifestyles," 2010)



**Photograph 4.7 City Park and Playground**

*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

Maplewood State Park is located 7 miles east of Pelican Rapids. Maplewood State Park invites campers and visitors year round. The park itself has capacity for 200 campers during the summer months. The park is named for the abundance of maple trees located within the park. The park boasts over 30 miles of various trails for use, including 20 miles of horse trails and 25 miles of hiking trails. In the winter there is 13 miles of cross country ski trails as well as 20 miles of snowmobile trails. The park also welcomes birders and has a checklist with over 150 species for them to identify. Maplewood State Park is home to many beautiful wildflowers from spring through fall. Some of the flowers typically found include trillium, hepatica, bloodroot, yellow lady's slipper, wild onion, prairie rose, and showy milkweed. The park also has many lakes for swimming and fishing. The park recommends reservations for camping spots on weekends and holidays, but does offer some sites that are non-reservable. There are 4 camping spots available for non-traditional campers who wish to visit from November 1 to April 1. ("Tpmorrows Habitat," 2006).

#### Tourism

Highways 59, 108, 24 and 3 are all designated scenic highways within Ottertail County. These highways take a driver by Maplewood State Park and to Lake Ida. The trail has several byway sites and interpretive trail sites particularly tied to history and natural vistas. Byway information is found at [www.visitfergusfalls.com](http://www.visitfergusfalls.com) The fold-out map created for this cultural resource is the most specific and tailored to this region than many other tourist resources available for this region. Many tourist resources and guides are state-wide and are published by the Explore Minnesota campaign. Reviewing these materials, this campaign fails to highlight Pelican Rapids specifically. For instance, the 2010 statewide travel guide (magazine), Explore Minnesota groups Pelican Rapids in a section for Central Minnesota. When one references this section, page 70 only highlights information about Pelican Pete and Minnesota State Park.

There are several tourist activities that can be attributed to the natural resources of the region. These include fall color sightings, winter sports, and hunting. Due to the unique setting of the region and the contextual relationship to the land, Pelican Rapids offers excellent opportunities for these activities. However, when one visits the Visitors Center or various websites, a visitor has to rely upon a lot of local knowledge about these activities. As an example, discussing the region's activities with a Fargo resident who actively participates in winter sports, he claims that Pelican Rapids is by far, the most friendly and welcoming to snowmobilers. This appears to be a success to continue to highlight and advertise if the goal is to promote tourism and target the future economy on natural resources.

A unique asset that appears to combine potential tourism and natural resources is the advertised and published Pine to Prairie Birding Trail. The publication and guide available at [www.mnbirdtrail.com](http://www.mnbirdtrail.com) provides at least six stop at or near Pelican Rapids. This is the most accessible and unique publication provided for this area.



**Photograph 4.8 Interpretative Signage in Downtown Promoting Birding**  
*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

### Natural Resource Influences

As part of the continued data collection, most notably with the interviews, this research team investigated the influence of the natural resources on the city's economy and population base. Upon initial investigation it appears that the natural capital has influenced the population and its seasonal fluctuation due to the recreational opportunities on the lake area. (Photograph 4.9). Tourism is a potential economy base than could grow based on the access to the natural resources within the city. The existing base of the economy (agriculture industries) is also influenced by the original settlement and the relationship to the natural resources. Listed below is a summary of assets and challenges discovered from the investigation of the existing natural resources.



**Photograph 4.9 Motel located on the steep slope section of Pelican Rapids**  
*Source: Nicole Crutchfield*

**Assets:**

- Vegetation, wooded lands
- State organization and role of DNR
- Management of the natural resources
- Preservation advocacy by organizations (such as Birding organizations and state government)
- Proximity to lake areas, wooded areas, farmland
- Parkland and open space available for recreation and beauty
- Birding and unique species due to wildlife habitat
- Snowmobile Trails and Bicycling trails that are managed and maintained and advertised
- Friendly community welcoming outdoors people
- Natural features
- Varied topography
- Complex hydrology system

**Challenges**

- Preservation requires active role on multiple different levels (local, state, federal and non-profit)
- Finances are required to advertise and market for tourism
- Maintenance and upkeep of resources
- Lack of population density and the needed awareness of available resources to local and area populations

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# 2010 Community Assessment

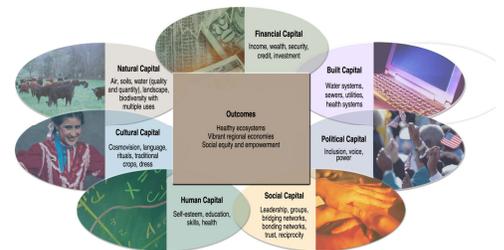
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## Chapter

# 5

## Human Capital



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## Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

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## Chapter Five Human Capital

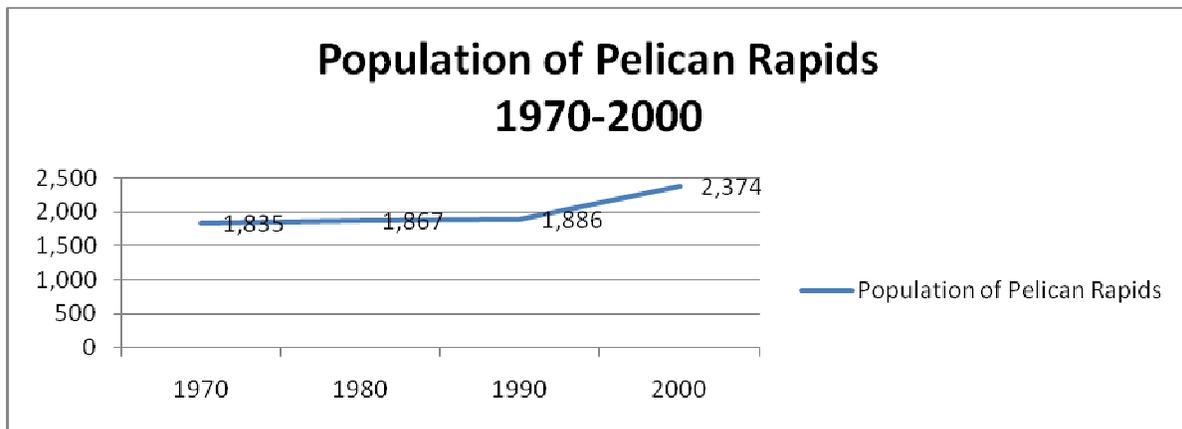
Human capital is the “attributes of an individual that contribute to their ability to earn a living, strengthen community, and to otherwise contribute to community organizations, to their families, and to self-improvement” (Flora and Flora, 2008). This type of capital is extremely important within a community because communities are built on and rely upon the people that live in the community. A community either thrives or fails do to the skills of the people that make it up and what options are available to instill future generations with these same skills to create a sustainable community. This chapter will highlight the skills and opportunities in the community explain their significance.

### Population

Population, in any community, adheres to a simple formula in terms of whether the community grows, decreases or maintains in terms of population. The three determining factors in this equation are: 1) Births; 2) Deaths; 3) Migration (both in and out). The formula for population change is as follows:

$$P^2 = P^1 + (B - D) + (I - O)$$

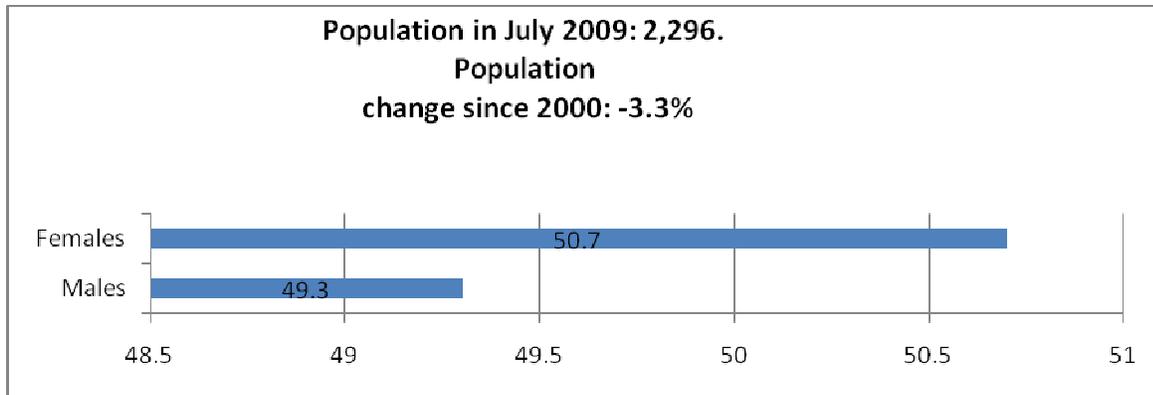
where P = population, B = births, D = deaths, I = in-migration, and O = out-migration.



**Figure 5.1 Population of Pelican Rapids, MN, 2000.**

*Source: 2000 Census Bureau*

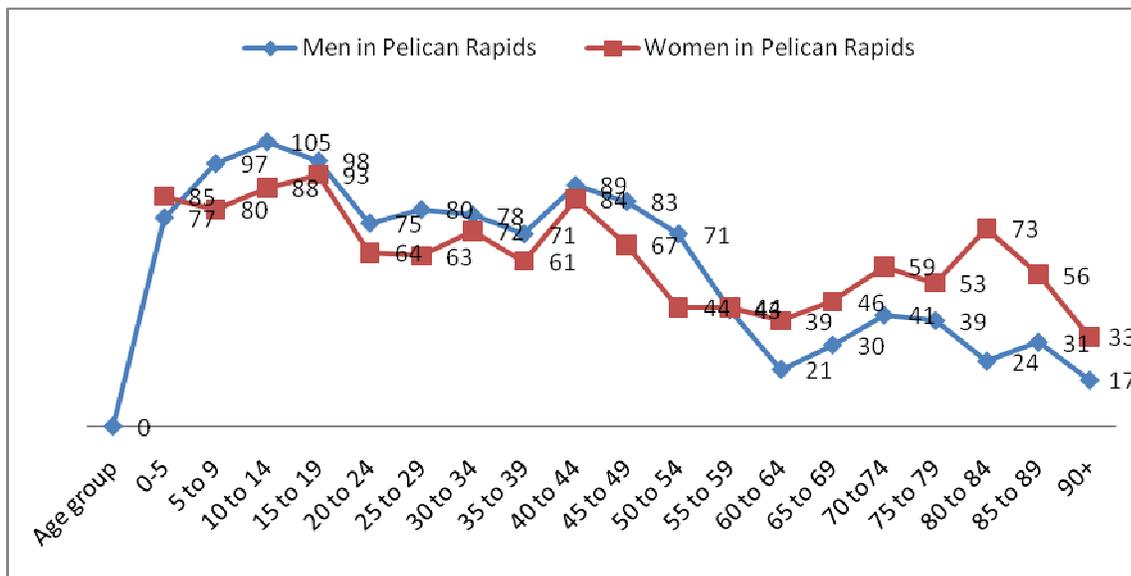
The population of Pelican Rapids, as of the 2000 census, was 2,374 people. Since that data was taken however the community has experienced a 3.3% loss in population as of 2009 which brought the population down to 2,296.



**Figure 5.2 Pelican Rapids' Population 2009**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000*

This assessment will attempt to act as a ‘skills inventory’ of the community to document special skills held by members of the community. This inventory may be helpful in terms of organizing events, councils, businesses and other things that may benefit the community. For example, if someone wanted to have any multicultural vendors at one of the many summer events held in Pelican Rapids, they can refer to this inventory and find that there is a multicultural committee who may direct them or find who to contact at the Somali grocery store. In this way, time is saved and resources can be exploited to the full extent as people can be matched up with the most appropriate person, organization, business, etc. As Pelican Rapids has a large and very diverse population (in terms of rural communities) it is full of human capital.



**Figure 5.3 Number of Males and Females, by Age, Pelican Rapids, MN, 2000.**

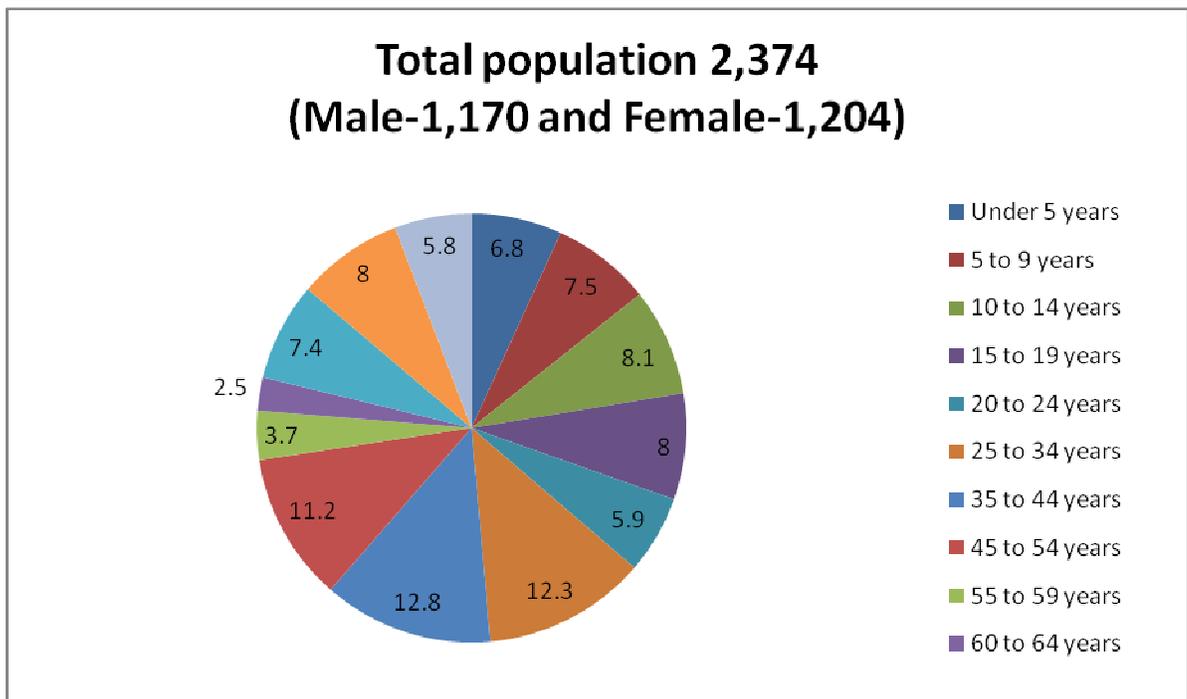
*Source: 2000 Census Bureau*

The demographical make-up of Pelican Rapids is nearly 50/50 in terms of male-to-female ratio. When broken down to age, there are more men in the community in early adulthood through the late 50's age range. However, after this there is sharp decrease in the male population which causes the male population to be smaller than the female population. This is very likely due to the shorter life expectancy for men.

As of the Census of 2000, there were 2,374 people, 884 households, and 558 families residing in the city. The population density was 905.8 people per square mile (349.8/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 962 housing units at an average density of 367.0/sq mi (141.8/km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the city was 60.43% White, 0.72% African American, 1.93% Native American, 1.58% Asian, 1.04% Pacific Islander, 6.76% from other races, and 4.54% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 23.59% of the population.

There were 884 households out of which 33.1% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 50.3% were married couples living together, 7.7% had a female householder with no husband present, and 36.8% were non-families. 33.5% of all households were made up of individuals. 19.2% of households had someone living alone who is 65 years or older. The average household size was 2.57 and the average family size was 3.31.

In the city the population was spread out with 27.6% under the age of 18, 8.7% from 18 to 24, 25.2% from 25 to 44, 17.4% from 45 to 64, and 21.1% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 36 years. For every 100 females there were 97.2 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 94.6 males.



**Figure 5.4 Percentage of Persons, by Age, Pelican Rapids, MN, 2000.**

*Source: 2000 Census Bureau*

### Total births 2000 by birthplace

Born in the same state	1,316
Born in another state	572
Born outside the US	2
Naturalized citizen	109
Foreign born, not US citizen	378

**Table 5.1 Total births 2000 by birthplace**  
*Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census; ePodunk*

### Total deaths 1999-2001

- **Total deaths:** 1,958
- **Cancer deaths:** 479
- **Motor vehicle accident deaths:** 36

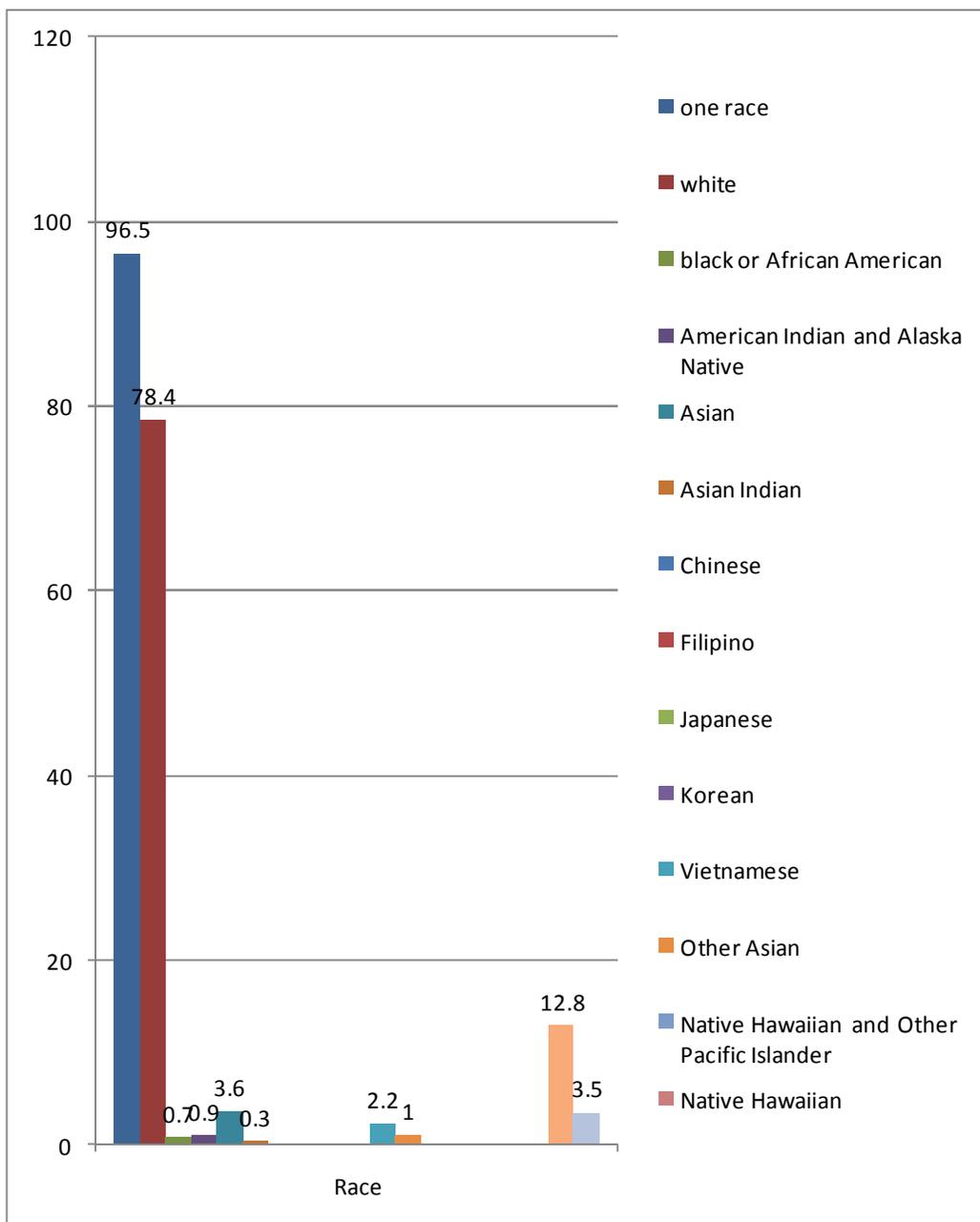
According to figures compiled by the Centers for Disease Control, 1,958 people died in Otter Tail County in the years 1999-2001. The county death rate was 11 per thousand people, compared with 8 per thousand people statewide.

During the same period, 479 people died from cancer. The county death rate from cancer was 2.8 per thousand people, compared with 1.9 per thousand statewide.

A reported 36 people died in motor vehicle accidents. The county death rate from such accidents was 0.2 per thousand people, compared with 0.1 per thousand statewide.

The average age of people living in Otter Tail County at the time of the 2000 census was 40.6, compared with 36.0 statewide and 36.2 nationwide.

## Race and Ethnicity



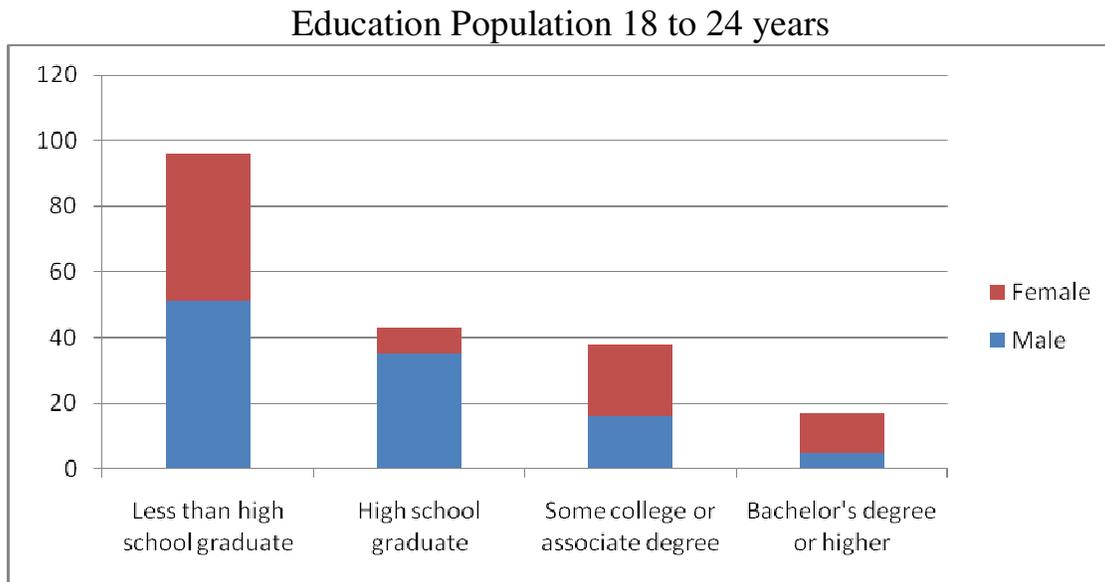
**Figure 5.5 Race and Ethnicity, Pelican Rapids, MN, 2000.**

*Source: 2000 Census Bureau*

## Education.

The education of the citizens of Pelican Rapids has a huge impact on how well the city functions and progresses. Pelican Rapids public education is served through Viking's Elementary School and Pelican Rapids High. Pelican Rapids school system was awarded a special grant through a program called the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant, which is a federally funded education grant whose goal is to "support the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects." This grant has provided great opportunities for academic achievement through programs like Teen Spot in the high school which provides help students develop "leadership, academic enrichment, volunteer and social opportunities". Another similar program is the Targeted Services which includes "academic tutoring, social skills development, and a variety of recreational activities."

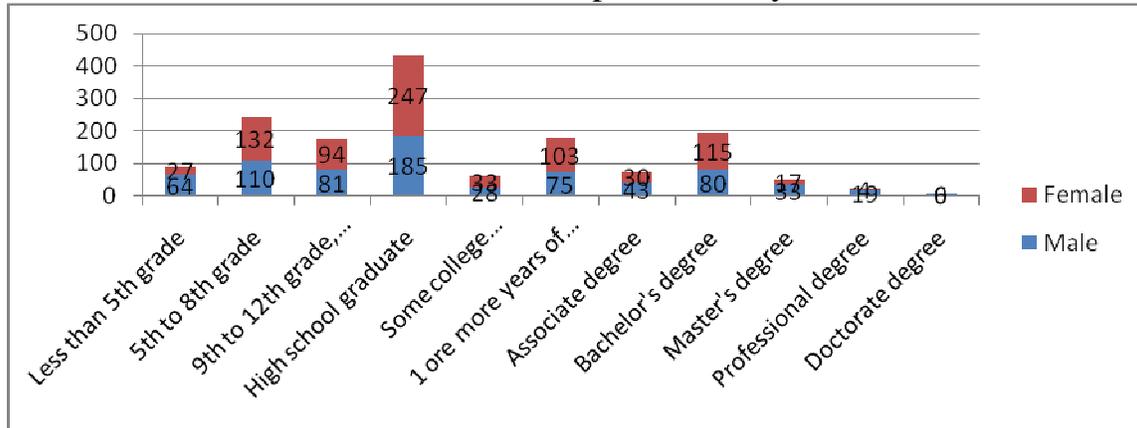
The educational attainment level of Pelican Rapids for citizens 25 and older is 28.3% for high school and equivalency; 20.4% have some college or associates degree; 12.4% have bachelor's degrees and 5.2% have Masters degree. One alarming aspect is the community's drop-out rate as 21.8% of students have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education level and 11.5% have between a 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade education level but no diploma.



**Figure 5.6 Education of population 18 to 24 years, Pelican Rapids, MN, 2000.**

*Source: 2000 Census Bureau*

## Education Attainment for Population 25 years and over



**Figure 5.7 Education of Population 25 years and over, Pelican Rapids, MN, 2000.**

*Source: 2000 Census Bureau*

### Education and Skills

The local school at Pelican Rapids has been an important asset for the community. The Pelican Rapids Public School system is a consolidated school district serving 1,000 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The schools have been providing an encouraging environment to the multicultural students by incorporating methods such as buddy system that pairs new immigrants with American students who help them through the school system. The library began offering four English-as-a-second-language programs designed to educate students about different cultures. In addition it also provided them with the ALP (Pelican Rapids Alternative Learning Program) for students who have not been successful in a traditional school setting.

The programs in academics, fine arts and athletics demonstrate their competitiveness by winning local, regional and state awards. The Pelican Rapids School continues to serve students well and as a result Pelican Rapids graduates have many opportunities when they graduate. In May 2010, sixteen students received \$569,000 dollars in scholarships (some over a 4-year college span). In addition to scholarships from colleges Pelican Rapids Students also received \$45,640 in scholarship money from local organizations.

Also, in defining human capital in the school system, “a teacher noticed the passion and excitement that some of her students had for soccer” and thus held a meeting and created a soccer team. In this way there is both skill showed through the student involvement, especially immigrant students, and athletic skill as well as through the organizational and needs-based recognition by the faculty to create the team. For further information and impact of the soccer team, refer to Chapter 6, Social Capital.

### Leadership

Leadership roles are mostly assumed by volunteers in the community as well as organizations like Lutheran Social Services, libraries and schools. Pelican Rapids also formed the multicultural committee, which coordinated a web of social services and provided a lead agency for the community’s integration efforts.

### Occupation.

There are a variety of occupations in Pelican Rapids that work together to make the community function. According to the 2000 Census, there are six different categories of occupations. The first is “Management, Professional, and Related Occupations.” The occupations that fit into this category include managers of farms and businesses, doctors, chiropractors, teachers, media/entertainers, etc. The