

ALBERTA is blessed with a beautiful natural environment and abundant globally valuable natural resources. We will protect our air, land and water while responsibly developing these natural resources.

- The Aboriginal population in Alberta is close to 250,000, or almost 8% of the province's total population.
- Alberta's Aboriginal ancestry population increased 23% between 2001 and 2006.
- Eighteen First Nations with a combined population of 16,000 people living on-reserve and six Métis Settlements with approximately 6,000 residents live in areas where oil sands are found. Thousands more Aboriginal people live off-reserve and off-Settlement in the three oil sands regions. They represent about 10% of the region's population.
- Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada to have a constitutionally protected land base for Métis people covering 512,121 hectares in eight Métis Settlements in northern Alberta.
- Aboriginal people continue traditional activities in the region, are involved in multi-stakeholder groups, express interest in responsible development and have involvement in the economic benefits of industry, including direct employment, service contracts and land agreements.

Aboriginal and industry activities in the region

- In 2008, more than 1,500 Aboriginal people were directly employed in oil sands operations, a 60% increase since 1998. This figure does not include construction-related or long-term contract employment.
- Many major oil sands companies have Aboriginal employment policies that recruit local residents into suitable positions. About 10% of the oil sands workforce is Aboriginal.
- There are more than 1,200 Aboriginal trades apprentices in Alberta, an increase of more than 400% since 2002.
- A joint venture between Bigstone Cree and Bronco Energy has resulted in the biggest oil sands project ever undertaken on First Nation reserve lands in Canada.
- A joint venture between Sonic Technology Solutions and Elizabeth Métis Settlement is potentially bringing a heavy oil upgrader to the Settlement.
- In 2008, the value of contracts between Alberta oil sands companies and Aboriginal companies was \$575 million, up from \$412 million in 2006.
- Since 1999, Aboriginal-owned companies across Alberta, including those in the oil sands region, have earned more than \$3 billion.

Aboriginal engagement

- The Government of Alberta respects the rights of Aboriginal people in the province, including in oil sands development decisions.
- The Supreme Court of Canada has determined Alberta has a duty to consult with First Nations where its land management and resource development decisions may adversely impact First Nations Treaty rights.

- In 2005, Alberta became one of the few provinces in Canada to establish an approach for First Nations consultation in its First Nations Consultations Policy on Land Management and Resource Development. Consultation guidelines, first developed in 2006 and updated in 2007, are in place to support the policy's implementation and help satisfy Alberta's duty to consult. These guidelines are under review.
- To further support First Nations consultation, the Traditional Use Studies Initiative – begun in 2003 – enables First Nations to collect data that aids the government's decision-making processes related to land management and resource development applications. The resulting information helps avoid and mitigate potential adverse impacts on First Nations' Treaty rights and identifies where significant traditional use sites may exist.
- The Athabasca Tribal Council – comprising the Athabasca Chipewyan, Chipewyan Prairie, Fort McKay, Fort McMurray and Mikisew Cree – is part of a protocol working group with the Government of Alberta tasked with designing guidelines specific to the northeast oil sands region.
- Aboriginal people have been engaged in Alberta's Land-use Framework and its resulting plans.

Community impacts

- The Government of Alberta is developing a resource and environmental management plan for the entire northeast region of Alberta, which looks beyond oil sands development on a project-by-project basis by addressing the cumulative effects of development.
- Government continues to collect feedback from Aboriginal and environmental groups to ensure there is a balance between environmental protection and economic development.
- The Land-use Framework sets out an approach to manage public and private lands and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals. It provides a blueprint for land management and decision-making that addresses Alberta's growth pressures, including the oil sands region. Alberta has been working with Aboriginal groups as regional plans are developed.
- Concerns over oil sands impacts on water and traditional food sources of First Nations downstream of the developments are of utmost importance to government and all Albertans.
- The Alberta Cancer Board conducted a comprehensive review of claims that there are higher-than-normal rates of rare cancers among residents of Fort Chipewyan. The peer-reviewed study found that while there was a slightly higher than expected number of cancers (51 cases in 47 individuals over 12 years) no link was found to the oil sands and Alberta Health Services said the rate should not be cause for alarm.
 - This review has not been supported by the community and government is re-engaging residents to establish a collaborative process intended to resolve unanswered questions.
- Further measures will be discussed with the community, and may include, but are not limited to:
 - hands-on roles in environmental monitoring of air, water, and fish and wildlife;
 - additional health investigations and epidemiological studies; and
 - two-way education and outreach, offering awareness of traditional knowledge and practice to non-Aboriginal participants, and diet-and-lifestyle health best practices to the local communities.