Canadian Sustainability Indicators Network (CSIN)

Learning Event #27 Summary

UNEP's GEO Data Portal

&

Developing an Indicator System for Winnipeg's Urban First Nations Community

July 30, 2008
10:00 – 11:30 am CT

Assembled by the CSIN Secretariat
www.csin-rcid.ca

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1. About CSIN Learning Events

The Canadian Sustainability Indicators Network is a group of over 500 indicator practitioners from across Canada and around the world working in a variety of governmental and non-governmental contexts. Practitioners share resources over a listserv and website, and participate in regular knowledge sharing opportunities, called "Learning Events". CSIN's unique approach in engaging practitioners is reflective of a larger goal to forward the discourse and practice of sustainability indicator development in Canada.

A CSIN Learning Event is an online virtual meeting currently powered by Elluminate Live!® 8.0. Use of the virtual meeting room is donated to CSIN by Thompson Rivers University. Relevant topics related to sustainability indicator development are explored using a presentation with discussion format. Participants from all levels of government, academia, NGOs, consultants and business bring perspectives and knowledge resources.

Participating in the network is free and easy; simply request to be placed on CSIN's listserv of 500 indicator practitioners and you will receive notices of upcoming events, along with news, reports and announcements. Past event summaries and presentations, as well as listserv archives are available from CSIN's website: **www.csin-rcid.ca**

More information about CSIN is available at our website or by contacting the CSIN Coordinator Christa Rust by email: **crust@iisd.ca** or telephone #204-958-7719.

2. Snapshot of the Learning Event

The 27th CSIN Learning Event occurred on Wednesday July 30, 2008 at 10:00 to 11:30 am central time. The two topics for Learning Event 27 included: UNEP's GEO Data Portal and Developing a Community Indicators System for Winnipeg's First Nations Community. There were a total of 15 participants registered to participate, although the actual that attended may be slightly different. Participants for this event were made up of the following sectors: academia, federal and provincial governments, non-governmental organizations and private organizations (Annex A: Learning Event Participants).

Our first presenter was **Stefan Schwarzer,** a GIS & Data Management specialist with UNEP. Stefan holds a Diploma in Applied Physical Geography from the University of Trier/Germany. He joined the United Nations Environment Programme in 2000, and is mainly responsible for the GEO Data Portal, a terrific source for statistical and geospatial data with many different forms of visualizations and analysis. The main areas of his work include statistics, GIS, website design and programming. Stefan presentation at this Learning Event provided background on the UNEP GEO Data Portal and provided participants with an interactive tour to the web-based portal and its features.

> About the UNEP GEO Data Portal
> The UNEP GEO Data Portal is the authoritative source for data sets used by UNEP and its partners in the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report and other integrated environment assessments. Its online database holds more than 450 different variables, as national, subregional, regional and global statistics or as geospatial data sets (maps), covering themes like Freshwater, Population, Forests, Emissions, Climate, Disasters, Health and GDP. Display them on-the-fly as maps, graphs, data tables or download the data in different formats.
>
> Portal Website: http://geodata.grid.unep.ch/

Our second presenter was **Christa Rust**, a Project Officer with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the CSIN Coordinator. She holds a Masters Degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg/Canada. Christa joined IISD's Measurement and Assessment team in June of 2007, after working with the Mikisew Cree First Nation in Fort McMurray Alberta for a period of two years. Joining IISD, Christa took on the role of project manager for a joint project with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) to develop an

indicator system for Winnipeg's urban First Nations community. Christa's presentation at this Learning Event provided participants with background on the project and an overview of the preliminary results of the community engagement phase of the project.

About the Joint Project
IISD and AMC are working together to establish an indicator system for Winnipeg's Urban First Nations community. This project was built upon a mutual desire to understand the well-being of Winnipeg's First Nation community and to develop tools that help the community achieve positive change. The project was designed with a bottom-up approach that directly engaged the grassroots community to accurately frame, identify and measure the well-being of the community through a series of semi-structured forums. In these forums, First Nations people and their service sector providers were directly engaged to help us understand the issues and concerns of the community.

Project Website:
http://www.iisd.org/measure/knowledge/community/first_nations.asp

3. UNEP's GEO Data Portal

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) project is the implementation of UNEP's mandate to keep the global environment under review. Initiated at the request of the UNEP Governing Council in 1995, GEO is both a process and a series of reports, analyzing environmental change, causes, impacts, and policy responses. It provides information for decision-making, supports early warning and builds capacity at the global and sub-global levels. GEO is also a communication process that aims at raising awareness on environmental issues and providing options for action.

Global Environment Outlook (GEO) is a consultative, participatory, capacity building process for global environmental assessment and reporting on the state of the environment, trends and future outlooks. GEO is both a process involving stakeholders from across the globe, as well as a product for environmental decision-making. It aims to facilitate the interaction between science and policy.

A world-wide network of Collaborating Centres forms a strong assessment partnership at the core of the process and a focus for building capacity at various levels. Comprehensive peer review and consultative mechanisms with governments, non-governmental organizations and scientific institutions are some of the other integral elements of GEO. Advisory groups provide guidance on conceptual approaches and methodology development and capacity building.

This participatory and consultative process gives GEO assessments scientific credibility, policy relevance and authority. It targets a wide audience by providing information to support environmental management and policy development.

GEO has many other impacts. It supports multi-stakeholder networking, provides a platform for the exchange of knowledge, promotes intra and inter-regional cooperation in identifying and addressing key environmental issues and concerns and builds capacity at many levels.

The GEO Data Portal is the authoritative source for data sets used by UNEP and its partners in the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report and other integrated environment assessments. Its online database holds more than 450 different variables, as national, subregional, regional and global statistics or as geospatial data sets (maps), covering themes like Freshwater, Population, Forests, Emissions, Climate, Disasters, Health and GDP. Display them on-the-fly as maps, graphs, data tables or download the data in different formats.

Website link: http://geodata.grid.unep.ch/
*Data Portal Tutorial and user guide are available at: http://geodata.grid.unep.ch/extras/tutorial.php

4. Developing an Indicator System for Winnipeg's Urban First Nations Community

IISD is working with the **Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC)**, the main association of Manitoba First Nations, to establish an indicator system for Winnipeg's Urban First Nations community. The initiative involves working collaboratively with the AMC and community members to build lasting capacity at the local level to set up, maintain and use indicators to improve decision-making. The ultimate goal is to make a positive impact on human well-being, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Sustainability indicators are being proposed to help understand the current state of the urban First Nations community, what course the community is on, and how far the community is from where they want to be. In essence, the sustainability indicators are expected to help the AMC move closer to the following objectives:

- build an improved understanding of the challenges facing Winnipeg's First Nations communities for both the First Nations and non-First Nation public and decision-makers;
- help identify critical problems and vulnerabilities and their underlying causes where policy action by First Nations and/or other actors is necessary;
- help identify the past successes of Winnipeg's First Nations community and factors that made success possible;
- through dialogue and engagement develop a set of goals, specific targets and building on past successes identify options for policies and actions that will help meet those goals;
- build capacity at AMC and in the First Nations community of Winnipeg to better diagnose its problems, to realize its successes and to develop confidence in envisioning, planning and implementing collective and individual action in the interest of achieving a positive future.

In order to accomplish these objectives and ensure the project meets the needs of the growing urban community, IISD and the AMC engaged the urban First Nations community and their service-delivery sector directly. This presentation concentrates on the preliminary results of the community engagement process and an overview of the project background, framework and methodology.

Website link: http://www.iisd.org/measure/knowledge/community/first_nations.asp

5. Learning Event 27

The virtual meeting room donated to CSIN, by Thompson Rivers University, has a record option that allows the virtual meeting to be recorded for later viewing. Recording the meeting enables CSIN Member that were unable to participate the opportunity to replay the virtual meeting so that they can hear and see the presentation as it occurred. To view the recording of the Learning Event visit the following link: **http://community.bccampus.ca/smallcities?go=1850890**. Copies of the individual presentations can also be viewed on the CSIN website: **http://www.csin-rcid.ca/**.

Annex A: Learning Event Participants

(Includes those who signed up for the call and were unable to attend)

1. Christa Rust [crust@iisd.ca]
2. Stefan Schwarzer [Stefan.Schwarzer@grid.unep.ch]
3. Bill Dalton (MNR) [bill.dalton@ontario.ca]
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15. Thomas Beaudry (CON) [Thomas.Beaudry@gov.mb.ca]