Community-Based Monitoring

Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) is a process where concerned citizens, government agencies, industry, academics, community groups and local institutions work together to monitor, track and respond to environmental issues of common concern.

What can be monitored?

Environmental monitoring involves watching/measuring any part of the environment to see if current conditions have changed compared to past (baseline) conditions. Can include:

- Impacts to the quality of water, ice, snow, air, soil
- Population changes in trees, plants, fish, wildlife, birds, frogs, water bugs (benthic invertebrates), etc.
- Ecosystem changes such as predator-prey relationships, nutrient cycling processes, etc.

What are the benefits?

- Communities can be empowered environmental stewards & can influence environmental policy
- Better protection of the environment by noticing changes/impacts earlier
- Healthier environment/ecosystems
- Monitoring that is culturally relevant, inclusive of traditional knowledge and community values
- Reliable, accurate and trusted monitoring information
- Reduced costs and easier planning
CBM Examples - First Nations Guardians: “Eyes & Ears” on the Land & Water

Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network:
An alliance of First Nations on British Columbia’s North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii associated with the Great Bear Initiative. The Network supports local Guardian Watchmen programs of eight member First Nations to monitor and ensure that activities and practices within their territories are responsible and consistent with community plans and government regulations. Environmental training partnerships have been established with Northwest Community College and Vancouver Island University.
http://coastalguardianwatchmen.ca

Innu Nation Environmental Guardians:
Guardians monitor industrial development in Innu territory in the areas of fisheries, forestry, wildlife and mining. They also undertake environmental research in partnership with government agencies and universities. The program includes a youth core and involves a training partnership with the Gorsebrook Research Institute at Saint Mary’s University in Halifax.
http://www.smu.ca/research/innu-guardian-program.html

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Mikisew Cree First Nation CBM:
A shared initiative between two First Nations whose traditional territories encompass the entire Athabasca tar sands region of northern Alberta. Guardians track changes to both water and land, based on scientific and traditional knowledge monitoring methods. They also conduct environmental research, both independently and in partnership with government agencies and universities. The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources assists with the integration of traditional knowledge in CBM.

Lutsel K’e Dene First Nation Ni Hat’ni Dene (Watchers of the Land):
An environmental stewardship program for Thaidene Nene, a newly established National Park Reserve on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, NWT. The program focuses on the protection of Thaidene Nene through a governance partnership between Parks Canada and LKDFN. Both adults and youth participate in the program that is modeled after the Haida Watchmen, a local program of the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network.
http://landoftheancestors.ca/team/ni-hatni-dene-program.html

Information Sources