

Greater Sudbury: A Regional Centre of Expertise Fact Sheet

The City of Greater Sudbury is committed to enhancing the health and well-being of residents by accepting the unique honour of being designated as a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) by the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies. As a result of accepting RCE status, Greater Sudbury will be required to embark on an ambitious plan to promote and empower the community to reach sustainable development through education. Achieving designation by the United Nations was opportune and possible due to the exceptional work of community experts in completing the Healthy Community Strategy and the Healthy Community Charter. Both documents served as the foundation of the application for RCE designation and will continue to influence the direction of the project.

What is the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS)?

The United Nations University is a branch organization of the United Nations that aims to assist the concerns of the UN through research and capacity building. Its function is to serve as a “strategic think-tank”. The United Nations University has a network of thirteen Research and Training Centres, of which, the Institute of Advanced Studies is one. A focus of the Institute of Advanced Studies, based in Yokohama Japan, is the creation of Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development.

What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?

The United Nations General Assembly declared January 2005 as the start of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. ESD outlines economic growth, social development, and environmental protection as subject areas for research and education that will, in combination, positively contribute towards an improved quality of life. The concept of ESD aims to encourage individuals and communities to create visions, and subsequently action plans, for sustainable development. Project implementation must include promotion, education, public understanding and training. Between 2005 and 2015 regions from different parts of the world will be participating by acting as Regional Centres of Expertise.

What is a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE)?

Regional Centres of Expertise are located within communities that are granted status by the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies. They share information and experiences between one another and form a knowledge network of best practices. RCEs are expected to foster relationships with differing levels of educational institutions and any related community organizations at the local level. They are “major engines” for the exchange of information and program development relating to sustainable development. Based on inclusiveness, cooperation and flexibility, RCEs and their outcomes will be monitored and reviewed locally, nationally and internationally. At this time, thirty-five RCEs, including Greater Sudbury, have been acknowledged worldwide.

What qualifies Greater Sudbury as a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development?

The City of Greater Sudbury has been active in developing and implementing healthy community strategies and initiatives since the 1970's, well before the term healthy communities was even proposed. A historical review of the City's progress as a Northern Ontario community clearly depicts the multitude of projects that have materialized as a result of the dedication from citizens past and present. With the strong collaboration and support of various sectors of the community, municipal leaders throughout history have been addressing and following the healthy communities model and practices.

The City of Greater Sudbury has a strong network of committees, boards, and panels that have each contributed to moving the City forward in a healthier direction. The most recent projects that have begun to mobilize the community around key initiatives, ultimately contributing to a healthier City, are the development of the Healthy Community Strategy and the Healthy Community Charter. Both documents were compiled and created by community experts to formalize and guide the process for application to the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies for RCE designation.

How will Greater Sudbury educate the community about sustainable development?

Creating healthier communities and overcoming complex societal problems requires collaborative solutions that bring communities and institutions together as equal partners and builds upon the assets, strengths and capacities of each. The ultimate goal of the Greater Sudbury RCE is to encourage behaviour change among large numbers of individuals about sustainable development. In order to influence such change, it is necessary for individuals to get beyond learning and, instead, act upon what they know. This idea of “transformative education” is the cornerstone of achieving sustainable community development.

With the successful designation of Greater Sudbury as a Regional Centre of Expertise, project implementation will include: the identification and selection of community members to form a Greater Sudbury RCE working group; a mapping exercise to outline formal and informal educational strategies for sustainable development; and a review of existing projects and activities that could potentially support the goals of the Greater Sudbury RCE.

Local government cannot achieve healthy community goals without the support and active engagement of its citizens. A healthy community for sustainable development is a collaboration of community stakeholders with a common objective to improve quality of life. Building partnerships with groups, organizations and individual citizens (with a keen interest in community affairs) is fundamental to the success of the Greater Sudbury RCE. According to the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies, “RCEs bring together institutions at the regional/local level to jointly promote Education for Sustainable Development. They build innovative platforms to share information and experiences and to promote dialogue among regional/local stakeholders through partnerships for sustainable development.”.

What are the goals of the Greater Sudbury RCE?

Greater Sudbury has pledged to advance the objectives of the Healthy Community Charter by establishing local relationships with educational institutions and interested organizations to raise public awareness and understanding of sustainable development. Formal partnerships will be developed in order to ensure the goals that have been entrusted to the City by the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies, will be reached, implemented and shared with the world.

What are the challenges ahead for the Greater Sudbury RCE?

Any major endeavor is always faced with challenges; the Greater Sudbury RCE is no exception. The following is a list of the challenges that will be influenced by the outcomes of the RCE initiative: poor health status; accidents and injuries; aging and outdated infrastructure; impaired ecosystem; declining lake water quality; homelessness; family poverty; illiteracy; out-migration; unemployment; and limited arts and culture. Because of these challenges, the implementation of the Greater Sudbury RCE must be a community endeavour.

What will the implementation model look like?

