
APPENDIX 10

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY GPI

HISTORY & QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

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1. Community Involvement in Developing Community GPI - History & Questionnaire Development

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Introduction

This paper reports on the extended community and professional effort that has taken the initial idea of applying GPI at the community level through to the working system now in the hands of the communities of Glace Bay and Kings County and the Universities – UCCB and Acadia - which serve them.

Kings County residents from community groups, agencies and interest groups played a major part in launching, shaping and sustaining this community GPI project. The literally hundreds of volunteer hours spent deciding on what was considered important to know, and the questions to ask, stand in strong testimony to the awareness of concerned local people of the potential of community GPI to help plan and support local action for personal and community betterment.

The unprecedented value of this large relational data base that has been generated stems also from the highly professional manner in which the survey was structured, administered, recorded and set up for analysis. As well, the results have been generated from a large sample, a high response rate and use is subject to a high level of ethics in the professionally developed guidelines for use of the data. Taking all of these factors together, the communities will be well served with analysis relevant to priority interests and not easily refuted when the results point to needed change.

Citizens Societies have been set up, both in Glace Bay and in Kings County,, to carry this process forward and to make the most of the opportunities. The Societies are non-profit agencies registered under the Companies Act of Nova Scotia. A general description of these societies and their role is outlined in this paper. Details of the formation and specifics of the structure and functions of the GPI Societies are set out in Appendices 9 and 10.

Objectives

GPI Atlantic, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Citizens for Community Development Society set out to involve the residents of Kings County in a project to develop and test a prototype Community Genuine Progress Index and to organize its use as a powerful tool for communities striving to gain greater control over their own destiny. Community response to the opportunities offered to track community health, wellbeing and other key community issues was strong and has sustained community interest and involvement throughout the long process of building the foundation for research and community action.

The extreme challenges of this venture notwithstanding, the data and the infrastructure for analysis, access and community action are in place, some analysis is completed and the momentum is building.

Summary Activities

The elements of the work undertaken include:

- Selection of Kings County as the test area from among a number of other areas in Mainland Nova Scotia based on the energetic interest and commitment of Kings CED Agency, all seven of its sector groups the community health boards and the Kings Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College.
- Intensive work with more than 65 people from some 40 community groups and agencies in Kings county, first: to agree on the priority sectors for analysis and second: through extended sessions with five work groups, to develop consensus on priority issues and aspirations and to set out the questions intended to provide the benchmark information.
- Survey design and methodology to validate the questionnaire was assisted extensively by Statistics Canada's Social Survey Methods Division. Selection of a validated random sample and survey procedures were set out with the direct involvement and assistance of HRDC Halifax.
- Organizing and conducting the extensive field survey of residents of Kings County, Nova Scotia. The survey of 78 pages was completed by the end of October 2002 by 1,900 respondents – a rate of response of 70 per cent. (The same survey, excluding the Agriculture section was administered in Glace Bay to 1,700 respondents with an 82% response.)
- Survey data entry, verification and data cleaning, virtually completed, are under the direction of GPI Atlantic, using the services of the Population Health Research Unit of the Faculty of Medicine Dalhousie University.
- Initial analysis of the data is underway and a strong cohort of Acadia University academics has begun analysis of the data, working in conjunction with the Kings community. The community has been re-engaged through formation of a society to own the data base, to be responsible to ensure protection of confidentiality and ethical use of the data and to assist community groups and agencies to work with Acadia in structuring analysis to serve their objectives. A parallel structure and procedure has been set up in Glace Bay in conjunction with University College of Cape Breton.

In addition to the work in Kings, GPI Atlantic applied essentially the same questionnaire in Glace Bay. This parallel activity and parallel organization will facilitate an unprecedented

level of community information and comparison, essential for benchmarking progress and development in both communities. As well, the results will enable the two communities to compare their situations and, where commonalities of interest exist, to work together for positive change.

The Framework

Community Genuine Progress Indicators promise to fill a near fatal gap in community capacity to act in any systematic way to achieve steady progress in health and wellbeing and community betterment. That gap is the ability to agree on how to set priorities and to evaluate results of action taken. Many efforts have been made to set up “evaluation frameworks” and evaluation procedures for policies and projects that address socio-economic-environmental issues but, none have really worked or been maintained.

Failure arises largely from three inherent problems. First, at the macro level, GDP is the “bottom line” measure of how we are doing as a national economy and, accordingly, actions at the local level that affect “employment” and “income” in GDP terms have clear and sanctioned priority over other community concerns. Second, for each program or project initiated or proposed at the community level an inordinate effort is required to define results in terms of relevance and effectiveness in a socio-economic-environmental framework. Third, most efforts to draw up frameworks and procedures are for government administrators to evaluate results of programs from a government perspective rather than as management tools for community action.

The concepts of our current **GDP** measures impact strongly on community. We currently gauge our well being and prosperity according to economic growth rates. The more we buy and sell, the more rapidly the economy will grow, and the “better off” we are assumed to be. The more fish we catch, the more fossil fuels we burn, the more rapidly we deplete our natural resources, the faster the economy will grow. The question is, are we as a society “better off” in the long run?

Community GPI on the other hand, draws from the broader provincial Genuine Progress Index. This index defines a broad societal consensus on what constitutes genuine progress and establishes benchmarks and consensus indicators of how we are doing. The community GPI allows communities (and governments) to step back and ask what are our goals and aspirations; what makes us content; what makes our work meaningful and our farms viable; and what makes our communities healthy? It is good that Kings County has a strong economy, but it is also important to make sure that the economy is functioning in a way that allows citizens to realize their most important goals. Quality of life factors into the equation. We want employment, but also work satisfaction, reduced stress and other elements that impact on Health and wellbeing. When we know what things really improve our well being, we can use them as new indicators of progress.

Evaluating existing social, economic and environmental assets and transactions can help provide a sound information base to modify and broaden community development strategies.

The process can assist a community to develop a set of annual benchmarks of progress – annual report cards that help the community build on, nurture and protect its greatest strengths, overcome apparent weaknesses, and revise development strategies where necessary to meet aspirations for greater, long-term well-being and sustainability.

Creating a community GPI is not only to develop a useful “product” for Kings County and Glace Bay. The process itself is a challenging educational tool – a way for the community to learn more about itself, to review the legacy it is leaving for its children, and to discuss the society it wants to create in the new millennium. It is an opportunity to share in developing the benchmarks and measures of progress toward the future the community genuinely wishes to inhabit.

This project is designated as a pilot for rural communities. The GPI is still in its development stage at the provincial level, designated as a pilot project for the country by Statistics Canada, and scheduled for completion in 2003. But the keenest interest has actually been expressed at the community level. Kings County volunteered itself as a “guinea pig” in experimenting with this community-level application..

Constructing a Relevant Community GPI

There are five elements central to constructing a community GPI to serve as a credible tool for effective community based planning. These elements are:

1. Indicators and data sets that are relevant to the community.
2. A professionally validated and comprehensive questionnaire.
3. Fully valid, ethical, survey procedure.
4. A professional infrastructure and ethical procedures to manage the data and undertake and support data analysis.
5. A dynamic community infrastructure that will access, ensure and facilitate widespread community use of the benchmark data; participate in design of ongoing data gathering to measure progress; and guide the selection of indicators in other sectors as priorities are determined.

The first four elements have been completed. For the fifth, the foundation community infrastructure is established both in Kings County and in Glace Bay, significant analysis is underway and community organizations and agencies are getting increasingly involved in analysis relevant to their interests.

The Survey Questionnaire

Community Priorities

With the support of GPI Atlantic, volunteers in work groups for each sector spent, literally, hundreds of hours developing a consensus on values to be tested, indicators to be developed and survey questions that would provide the needed information. The product of this work was a set of draft questions in the following sectors of community interest:

- Well Being
- Volunteer Activity
- Employment/Underemployment
- Peace and Personal Security
- Health
- Soils and Agriculture
- Ecological Footprint

The resulting sections were then consolidated to provide an integrated questionnaire and, with the assistance of officers from Halifax and Kentville HRDC, the sample was selected and applied in the field.

Validating the Questionnaire

Since this is a pilot project developing instruments that can be replicated by other communities, GPI Atlantic made every effort to ensure that the survey design phase was fully and properly completed, with expert validation at every stage. This work has generated a first-rate data collection tool yielding results never before available at the community level in Canada. The following tasks were all successfully accomplished to bring this prototype for a community Genuine Progress Index survey to completion.

- 1) Senior Methodologist, Jane Mulvihill, Social Survey Methods Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa reviewed the draft survey in great detail, line by line and word by word, and in extensive exchanges, reviewed fine points of phrasing and meaning and re-wording questions for greater clarity.
- 2) Statistics Canada feedback was fully incorporated to re-write many questions, change the organization of sections, revise virtually all the instructions, and completely redo the food consumption section and time use survey.
- 3) The revised questionnaire was then field-tested. Four informal tests produced further revisions, and 24 formal tests were then conducted under actual field conditions by a team of interviewers. Length of survey, question ambiguities, respondent reactions, and usability of results were all carefully tested.
- 4) Test results were reviewed with the staff testers/interviewers and the feedback incorporated into another review and iteration of the questionnaire with Statistics Canada. This work was again aimed at further clarifying and simplifying questions, refining the instructions,

changing the order of several questions and generally improving ease of use and clarity for analysis.

- 5) At the same time, the questionnaire was reviewed by Dr. Andrew Harvey, Director of Time Use Research, Department of Economics, St. Mary's University, and president of the International Association of Time Use Research; and by Chris Jackson, in the Chief Statistician's Office, Ottawa. Both gave detailed advice and feedback on re-formatting the time use survey and re-writing the instructions. Their feedback was incorporated into a newly designed and formatted time use survey, with an entirely new 5-page section demonstrating to respondents in sample form how the time use diary is completed.
- 6) The newly revised questionnaire was then reviewed for a second time by Jane Mulvihill, Senior Methodologist, Statistics Canada; and her detailed feedback was again incorporated into a newly revised questionnaire.
- 7) That fourth revision was then reviewed by Paul Kelly, Questionnaire Design Resource Centre, Social Survey Methods Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, for advice on formatting. Mr. Kelly reviewed every detail in the questionnaire, providing pages of detailed advice used to again revise the questionnaire, line by line, with particular attention to question formatting, simplifying and clarifying instructions, and eliminating further ambiguities of phrasing.
- 8) At the same time, the food consumption section of the questionnaire was dropped and replaced, on Statistics Canada advice, by a food consumption diary, which was newly designed, formatted, reviewed and revised by Jeff Wilson, of the GPI Atlantic staff.
- 9) The entire questionnaire was then re-formatted by a professional typist/graphic designer, Carol Johnstone of Windword Graphics, who also did the final layout in of the time use survey, and prepared the questionnaire in camera-ready form for the printer. Ms Johnstone code numbered the entire questionnaire to allow compatibility with data input coding procedures.
- 10) The questionnaire then went through three separate professional editing/proof-reading iterations by Dr. Irene Nowaczek, a professional editor, Anne Monette (of GPI Atlantic staff), and Ken Macdonald (GPI Atlantic) with changes incorporated into the final version.
- 11) As a final stage, Hugh Gough, senior methodologist in Statistics Canada's Social Survey Methods Division in Ottawa, assisted in the writing and design of a confidentiality and consent agreement with respondents. This document was also reviewed by Mike Pennock, Research Director, Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University, where the data were initially stored on a secure computer facility.

IN SUM, all stages in the survey design phase were successfully completed, including expert review and validation of the data collection tool by senior Statistics Canada staff, proper field-testing of the questionnaire, formatting and professional design of the entire questionnaire,

complete redesign of the food consumption diary and time use survey sections, entry of data input code numbers, and proper and secure randomization of the respondent sample.

Observations on the Survey Instrument

The unique strength of the questionnaire is the development of information on the interrelationships of economic, social and environmental elements of community life – interrelationships that reflect how people and communities function rather than the separated interests of government departments, businesses and other interests impacting on the community from outside. Accordingly, building community capacity to take ownership of community GPI is critical to its success.

Also critical is community understanding that while priorities and information requirements must be set by the community, competent professional advice and assistance is needed to help frame the questions and structure the questionnaire. Such assistance is mandatory to ensure that the questionnaire is:

- Statistically valid and therefore useful and defensible;
- Readily understandable to respondents, thereby providing relevant results; and
- Able to establish the interrelationships among the economic, social and environmental elements of individual, family and community life – the unique and fundamental feature of Community GPI.

While not critical, there are strong advantages to communities to ensure some basic commonality and comparability of survey questions with other communities. Where results point to action that would benefit many communities, common results will strengthen the hand where policies and behaviour need to be changed or challenged. In addition, as the process evolves, communities can learn from each other's successes and mistakes. To "go it alone" would be seriously limiting and inordinately expensive.

Finally, communities should be aware that administering a survey of this size and comprehensiveness, has been proven possible and do-able, even with volunteers but only with intensive training, development of professional attitudes and informed and dedicated management.

The questionnaire, as developed, is a tool that can be used in other communities. Experience indicates, however, that there are some redundancies and some redrafting will be undertaken to improve the document. Some elements (e.g. agriculture) may not be relevant in some communities and might be dropped. Alternatively, other communities may see other elements as priorities and wish to incorporate them. Such additions would be desirable but will require the kind of effort outlined above. The core concern is that intensive community involvement is required, both to set priorities and values and to use the results to ensure that the information serves as a powerful tool for community self-betterment and not just an instrument for academic research and senior government policy decisions.

The Field Survey

Sample and Targets

During the process of questionnaire development, the random sample for Kings County was selected with professional assistance from HRDC and through co-operation with the Electoral Commission. The sample was arranged alphabetically for individuals both by name and by street address. As a result of Statistics Canada feedback, the sample size was increased to 2,000 in order to allow two full cross-tabulations of data with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5%. An additional 1,500 names were obtained as back up in case of non-response, and also because of the necessity of eliciting additional respondents in the 15-18 year old age bracket. An initial 8 week test over the summer of 2000 produced 150 completed and validated surveys and provided valuable insights into the challenges of managing such an extensive and personal questionnaire.

Now concluded, the Kings survey generated 1,900 completed and validated questionnaires with an overall response rate of 70%. For Glace Bay, 1,800 questionnaires were completed with a response rate of 82%.

Survey Management

With the approval of the project by CRP in early 2001, together with other support to GPI Atlantic, a solidly funded, professionally managed survey project was launched in Kings and in Glace Bay. The survey in Glace Bay – a much smaller area - was managed and directed by GPI Atlantic with staff hired by GPI Atlantic to conduct the work.

In Kings County in March 2001, the local firm of C. Trudel & Associates was engaged by the Society to deliver 2000 completed and validated surveys under the technical direction of GPI Atlantic. An active nine-person citizens steering committee was formed to provide general direction and facilitate community support for the project. The committee included a municipal counsellor, a highly respected senior church deacon, the chief medical officer for the region, a community health Board representative and other respected and supportive community representatives.

A well designed program to advertise the community GPI survey and to recruit community co-ordinators and surveyor field staff was implemented. Excellent articles in the Chronicle Herald and Kentville Advertiser, as well as TV and radio coverage launched the survey and created an enthusiastic and receptive atmosphere in the community. To administer the survey effectively, five survey teams were set up for the principal communities of the county including, Kingston, Berwick, Kentville (two teams) and Wolfville. Respondents on the sample survey list were identified and contacted by community co-ordinators to enlist their participation. Subsequent house calls were made by the surveyor staff as assigned by the community co-ordinators. Surveys were either left with the respondents to be picked up the following week; or should the respondent require, assistance was provided by the surveyor.

Completed surveys were checked by the community co-ordinators and surveyors were paid on the basis of properly completed and validated surveys. The Project Manager verified records, exercised quality control and ensured that overall survey administration proceeded as required. Surveys were coded to permit effective administration and all procedures were undertaken with the greatest care to ensure full confidentiality and to ensure the statistical validity of the survey in all its aspects.

Progress and Problems

By the end of June (2001), approximately 700 surveys had been completed. It became evident that the summer presented particular challenges to the survey as organized, due to time demands on rural participants in an agriculture based economy and to absences of residents on holiday. Consequently, in consultation with community groups, it was agreed to suspend surveying over the summer.

After a summer hiatus, survey administration was resumed in mid September 2001. Surveyors and community coordinators were trained and put into the field. The citizen's steering committee was referenced to help with community advocacy in order to help meet the targets for response rates.

Between September and December, about 400 surveys were added to the 700 already completed, for a total of 1100. At this point, it became clear that a new approach was required if the Kings County response rate of 62% was to be brought up to that of Glace Bay. In the midst of this planning, the Kings County Project Manager had to suddenly withdraw due to health reasons. This unfortunate occurrence became, out of necessity, an opportunity to reorganize the project.

The action taken was to set up a GPI Kings County office under the direct supervision of GPI Atlantic, hiring a Project Manager rather than contracting out the survey work. In January 2002 a new approach was outlined, and advertisements placed for a new Project Manager. Candidates were interviewed in February and a new manager began work in March. In consultation with Statistics Canada, the data collection goal was revised to 1900 surveys to be completed. With such a lengthy survey (2 hours plus), Kings presented a more difficult challenge than Glace Bay due to the wide dispersion and greater diversity of the population across Kings County.

Several steps were taken to achieve the critical goals. Remuneration for field staff was changed to blend a bonus incentive with a basic wage for surveyors to better reward the effort required to achieve good response rates, paying greater compensation for refusal conversions than for new surveys. In addition, the citizens steering committee became more actively engaged in refusal conversions, building on the publicity already developed to heighten survey awareness in the county and increase response rates.

By July, through a revamped community outreach process, plus extra staff time and expense, 1850 surveys had been completed. The response rate was just below the goal of 70%, however, so the remaining 50 surveys required for statistical quality were sought only from conversion of earlier refusals, a more complex and time-consuming process. The active support of several community leaders and the local steering committee was further engaged and, using the most

experienced field staff, sufficient “conversions” were made to achieve the goal of 1900 surveys and a 70% response rate.

Difficulties/Challenges

Response rates will vary widely among communities. The cliché that no two communities are alike is manifest in this project in several important ways:

- Response rates to this kind of time-consuming survey may be affected widely by the current employment and economic status of the locale. It appears that a lower unemployment rate means less interest and time for filling out lengthy surveys like this one.
- Likewise, recruiting and retaining survey staff is more difficult in the lower unemployment region, where more work options are available. We experimented with some success with using a small additional financial incentive for surveyors in these regions.
- Residents of larger broader geographic areas, such as Kings County, seem to have less affiliation with the county overall and its issues, as many seem attached mainly to their own local municipality or sub-region.
- The label “community” cannot be applied automatically to every sub-region. Social cohesion and the resulting level of participation vary widely from place to place.

For some communities increased time and resources will be needed at the outset to reach goals for community participation. In many places it will take more time and champions to imbue a strong sense of ownership locally and therefore to build the future sustainability of the project. One clear lesson is that health, stress and personal and community wellbeing are universal and front of mind concerns and should be featured prominently in efforts to achieve community buy-in.

One other important lesson learned was that delays in following through on any of the steps – community ownership, agreement on priorities, design, administering the questionnaire and beginning to make results available – any hiatus will seriously dampen down the community energy needed to support and sustain the activities. All the ducks need to be lined up before the start, including funding, professional resources and community support to ensure a steady crescendo of activity. Loss of momentum is costly, both financially and in the extent of and commitment to effective community action.

Data Entry

Responsibility for data entry was assumed entirely by GPI Atlantic and has now been completed. The procedures, format and programs for data entry and access for analysis was completed under

GPI Atlantic direction, by the Population Health group at Dalhousie University. The infrastructure to address this task was set up in Glace Bay and organized and tested using the Glace Bay survey data which was ready earlier than that from the Kings survey. The Kings data were transferred to the Glace Bay office and all Kings Data have now been entered.

In October 2001, recruitment and training of data entry personnel was undertaken with funding assistance to GPI Atlantic under the Community Employment Innovation Project (CEIP) of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC). This program enabled appropriate Glace Bay and area residents to be identified by the SRDC and forwarded to GPI Glace Bay for data entry training and management. This assistance has been important in enabling GPI Atlantic to help address the additional expenses incurred by a lengthier process of survey development and administration than originally budgeted.

Progress in the Glace Bay project enabled a seminal meeting of the Principal Investigators to be held in the last week of February 2002. More information on this is contained under "Infrastructure Development". One of the important developments growing out of the meeting was an understanding of how the data entry programs could be improved to create a more effective database that is now available to researchers nationwide, and that will provide a template for other Canadian communities developing their own indicators.

Given the continued emphasis on quality in the project, and with the assistance of Dr. George Kephart and Mike Pennock of Dalhousie University's Population Health Research Unit (Principal Investigators in the project), it was decided to redesign data entry programs and re-enter the Glace Bay data. Because entry of Kings County data had not yet begun, there was no delay for the Kings County project and, in fact, Kings received considerable benefit from these measures, as has the project as a whole.

Re-entry of the Glace Bay surveys occurred in April, May and June, with the Kings surveys following in July through to the end of November. Further, GPI Atlantic applied ON-SITE, an innovative collaboration between the Alliance of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and Human Resources Development Canada, for a data entry facilitator. This individual, hired in April has facilitated data entry for both the Glace Bay and Kings County projects. Throughout this process, attention has been given to maintaining the highest standards in research and data entry.

After the data entry was fully completed, checked and verified, the principal investigators examined the data set and decided to implement a data cleaning and data weighting process - a painstaking effort to ensure the very highest quality data. The project partners assumed the time and costs for this valuable process, since it was not included in the original funding request. The data cleaning process for the data is now completed except for some final work on the consumption and time use data.

Infrastructure for Analysis and Research

Region

Many academic units and agencies are contributing substantial support to the current project through facilities (e.g. data storage), faculty research time, student training, and financial contribution. The Population Health Research Unit, Dalhousie University (PHRU), housed the 2001-02 baseline data. PHRU director, Dr. George Kephart, and research director, Michael Pennock, provided expertise to guide the targeted in-depth studies on the baseline data; to design the follow-up survey instruments, oversee data analysis and preparation of reports, assist in the development of specialized software to support direct community access; communicate project results through scholarly articles, presentations; and ensure accessibility of the database to scholarly researchers.

At Dalhousie's Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health: Carol Amaratunga, PhD, executive director, has led the analysis of research results, and contributed financially to analysis of unpaid work data. Saint Mary's University: Andrew Harvey, PhD, director of the Time Use Research Program, Economics Department, directed the in-depth research on the time use data and their correlation with other variables, and will work with PHRU to incorporate time use variables in the follow-up surveys.

At University College of Cape Breton, Peter MacIntyre, PhD, and resident of Glace Bay, has advanced statistical and methodological skills, and is leading UCCB faculty in analysis of Glace Bay data. At Memorial University, Doug May, PhD, Economics Department, and Alton Hollett, director of the Newfoundland Statistics Agency, developed that province's Community Accounts. They are exploring the applicability of the Newfoundland Community Accounts to the Kings and Glace Bay data, and the potential for expanding the Newfoundland Accounts through use of additional variables from the Kings and Glace Bay surveys.

Other non-academic partnerships, participants, and advisors are also part of the growing analysis infrastructure. Hans Messinger, Director, Industry Measures and Analysis, Statistics Canada, and staff of the Social Survey Methods Division provide in-kind support through general advice and review, and assistance with survey methodologies and comparability with national data sets. Stacey Lewis, executive director of UCCB's Cape Breton Wellness Centre, is organizing and facilitating community-researcher meetings in Glace Bay and ensuring participation of relevant policy actors. The Cape Breton County Economic Development Authority will use the results and participate in community consultations. Dr. Richard Gould, Chief Medical Officer for the Annapolis valley Region is actively involved with the District Community Health Boards and the Valley Health Foundation in helping to initiate analysis of the unique and comprehensive data on health and well being.

Kings County

This growing county infrastructure has recently been expanded through the organization of a cohort of faculty members in a number of departments at Acadia University. This development is a major breakthrough for Kings County. Glyn Bissix, PhD, Rene Murphy, PhD, Linda Lusby, LLB, Edith Callaghan, PhD, lead an inter-disciplinary Acadia faculty team which is drawing in and integrating research and analysis in a growing number of university departments. Acadia is the local custodian of the Kings data base. A citizens society has been formed to oversee the ethics and integrity of its use for academic and community research and facilitate community access for planning, action and measuring genuine progress against the benchmarks provided by the survey.

The Acadia group is firmly committed to working with the community and to focusing research and analysis in areas considered priority by community organizations and agencies within the County. In addition to the data itself, the Acadia group will be able to draw on the work being done on data management and analysis across the region and on the technical services and advice of GPI Atlantic in expanding and improving the Genuine Progress Indicators and measures of genuine progress.

Community Structure in Kings County

Opportunity

From the beginning, community organizations in Kings County have been and remain the prime drivers for this project. Starting from the early response to become the test area in the first instance, selection of indicators, design of the questionnaire, guiding the survey and participating directly in the work required to achieve the target response rates, community groups and local agencies have been front and centre and are now organizing to make the most of the opportunities for use of this rich data source.

And rich it is. The large sample and the high response rates in Kings County and Glace Bay provide baseline data which will allow much more detailed analysis of relationships among variables at the community level than is possible from other existing data. Remarkable insight into quality of life will be provided by the gathered data on employment, income, livelihood security, and work schedules; population health; community values; care-giving; voluntary work; safety and security; agriculture and land use; impact on the environment (including energy and transportation use, recycling etc.); food consumption; education and other demographic characteristics; and a time-use diary.

This unique relational data is particularly valuable to agencies concerned with health and with peace and security, both of which recognize that many key factors affecting their concerns lie well outside their mandate and jurisdiction. The Kings and Glace Bay surveys provide a unique

statistical foundation for negotiating changes in policies of other jurisdictions to improve outcomes in the health and justice sectors.

It is clear that Kings County and Glace Bay citizens will know more about themselves, their aspirations and their situation than any other community in Canada and probably North America. They will have benchmarks on their current situation, clear comparisons with other provinces and the nation and ability to measure progress in terms most meaningful to families and communities.

The integration of diverse data, and the very different socio-economic profiles of the two communities, will stimulate important new comparative research on determinants of health, well being, peace and security and other important societal issues. Outcomes and research methods will interest communities, institutions, and policy makers seeking community-based solutions to pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. In addition, already in early stages, the process is engendering interactions between university and community actors; stimulating assessment of effective means of communicating results; and opening the opportunity to examine the capacity of indicator research to speak to practical community needs.

Organizing for Action

In all of the work that has been done to date to construct and administer the survey, the overriding message transmitted by the Citizens Society, the county steering group and GPI Atlantic is that “this is not a project *for others* to study us but *for us* to examine where we are in relation to our values and to develop the tools to help define and measure progress generated by local action for community betterment”. Community interest groups and local agencies are the only ones that can make this goal a reality

It is clear from the large investments in this project that there is conviction that the data will provide rich resources for policy analysis and program development by departments and agencies of government and national institutions concerned with such issues. The universities see the data as prime research material for analysis, papers, doctoral theses and student education and experience. Business will come to see the potential for market assessment, product development and marketing as will independent research institutions lobbying for action. For most of those involved, however, the capacity for much improved community action has always been seen as the primary outcome of this work.

Whatever the rationale for this investment by others, Kings County is using this unprecedented opportunity to take charge of the community GPI as a powerful tool for relevant and effective local action. With the high quality data in hand, the highly competent professional, academic and technical infrastructure in place and all dedicated on paper, at least, to serving the community, it remains to the community to fully take up this challenge.

Steps were taken to reactivate and build on the community energy that supported this project in the first place. The Kings steering group, in conjunction with Kings CED Agency and GPI Atlantic, formed the GPI Kings Society which has now presented two work shop sessions to demonstrate the extent of the data, inviting participation in directing the analysis. Invited to

participate were all those involved in the earlier sessions from the 40 community and interest groups, other activists in the community and the general public.

Functions to be Served by Community GPI

At its core, the Community GPI serves as an audit on genuine progress. Benchmarks are set. Measures of progress and ways to measure are agreed upon. Impact of action is assessed using these measures and decisions are made by others to continue, change or stop the action.

Another primary function of the community GPI is to provide the rationale for particular socio-economic-environmental investment/policy decisions of priority to the community. This function is immensely important to the community for two reasons. First, the over-riding priorities for legitimized public spending decisions relate primarily to transactions affecting income, employment and consumption, i.e. measures defined by the GDP. Community GPI broadens these measures to legitimize and reflect many more aspects of community, family and individual concern.

Second, the community faces a governance structure with budgets and policies focused around specific sectors, problems and jurisdictions. The real world is not divided up this way. The GPI for example can demonstrate that a 15 cent investment in education can generate a \$1.00 saving in health care – a powerful argument to government to negotiate budget trade-offs between the departments of Education and Health and between federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions. As well, putting legitimized numbers to policy issues – such as calculating costs of soil erosion as a cost of clear cutting – gives a much better basis for decision making than pitting interest groups against one another.

Access to fully validated, unchallengeable and relational information as is being generated by the community GPI project places community interests in a strong position; first, to plan and adjust action for community betterment; and second, to negotiate changes in public, institutional and private sector policies and investment decisions that affect the community.

Governance of Community GPI

To effectively use this powerful tool, it will be necessary to:

1. Maintain and expand the GPI Audit;
2. Help community and interest groups to use community GPI to:
 - a. Plan and evaluate strategy and action for community betterment.
 - b. Use Community GPI measures to help negotiate changes in investment and policy decisions to support genuine progress in the community.

The audit function should be guided by community interests but be independent of them. The other functions should be community driven and owned by community focussed interests.

Specifically the ongoing work to ensure full community benefits is community organized action to:

- Develop specific indicators based on the benchmark data and design and oversee the future periodic information gathering required to measure progress.
- In time, expand the base. The work to date has generated benchmark data for seven broad sectors. The Provincial GPI encompasses 22 sectors.
- Provide training, liaison and negotiation services to community and interest groups to ensure effective access to the data and to the technical and analytical services that will be available through the Acadia group and GPI Atlantic.
- Encourage and facilitate community and interest group use of the data for planning and for measuring success of action and for advocacy of desirable change in policies, regulations and programs.
- Organize to work with other communities that are generating similar measures and looking for partners in support of change.

The work shops in February explored ways to organize within the community to continue and sustain this work, culminating in the formation of the GPI Kings Society , The work accomplished to date and planned for the future by this Society and the twin GPI Society formed in Glace Bay is set out in the report on the activities of these two agencies.

Conclusion

Community GPI, as it is emerging, is a far more comprehensive and powerful tool than was ever envisaged at the initiation of this project. The work involved has proven to be daunting and difficult. It has also succeeded in generating a unique, small area, relational data base – information which is recognized to be of significant interest and value by those government departments and agencies that have accepted the imperative that many factors that affect their mandate lie outside their control. As indicated, this acceptance is particularly strong in the fields of health and peace and security. Also, for example, consensus valuation of soil erosion, as a legitimized cost of clear cutting, permits rational negotiation and decision making as opposed to interest group confrontation.

The already proven value of genuine progress indicators at the macro level has led to the assembly of a substantial infrastructure for analysis and research. This infrastructure provides an outstanding opportunity for communities to assemble information that serves their priorities and, at reasonable cost, have access to the technical and analytical services that can make community GPI a practical tool for community betterment.