

For Immediate Release
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M.A.P.S. (Mapping and Planning Support) Alberta Capital Region receives award for using GIS to support collaborative social service planning



From Left to Right: Alex Miller, President ESRI; Deborah Morrison, Co-Ordinator, M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region, Julia Healy and Leanne DiMarcello, Social Geographers, M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region, and Mark Kachmar, Account Manager, ESRI Canada

Edmonton, Alberta - M.A.P.S. (Mapping and Planning Support) Alberta Capital Region was presented with an Award of Excellence at ESRI Canada's Regional User Conference in Edmonton today. Mark Kachmar, Account Manager, ESRI Canada, presented the Award in recognition of M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region's successful implementation of GIS to support social service planning.

"The Award is in recognition of their innovative and exciting method of using GIS and mapping to support local area networks of social service providers," said Mark Kachmar, Account Manager, ESRI Canada.

M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region, located in the City of Edmonton, Alberta, supports local area networks of social service providers in planning by creating maps and assisting them with the use of maps. M.A.P.S. is funded by the Community Partnership Enhancement Fund, an initiative of Alberta Children's Services. It has been funded since the fall of 2004. Its mandate is to work with human services partners to improve service delivery to children and families.

"M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region is extremely honoured to be recognized for our use of GIS for community development," said Deborah Morrison, Coordinator, M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region. "We are bolstered by this award in our commitment to the development of best practices in this area."

M.A.P.S. uses GIS to create maps based on the unique needs of each local network. The local networks include non-profit social service providers, government social service departments and community leaders and volunteers. The maps serve as a central component of collaborative decision making and planning processes. Plans are made for more effective and coordinated service delivery within a geographical area or for a specific target population; new ideas for responding to a need are identified, action plans created; and resource allocation decisions are often made. As a result of the developing relationship between this technology and decision-making, social service planning is becoming much more evidence-based and inclusive. Maps are allowing statistics and other user unfriendly information to be viewed in an easily understood format thereby leveling the playing field between government employees, an over extended non-profit sector, and passionate community members. Community mapping puts the same information into the hands of all of the participants in a collaborative decision making process allowing for all participants to decide together what information is valuable to them

rather than having it decided for them by others. M.A.P.S' work directly impacts decision making within the human service sector.

M.A.P.S. is supporting increased opportunities for immigrant, refugee, and isolated families by including these minority groups in the process of identifying the problems and creating solutions at a community level. Traditional human service programs have not been attracting some marginalized community members, community mapping includes them in the process thereby increasing the odds of their involvement and results in services that are more sensitive and appropriate to their needs. Trusting relationships with marginalized community members are created during the process, which also contributes to marginalized people accessing appropriate community based services.

M.A.P.S. is presently working with 15 local area networks to plan more effectively the delivery of social services within the Edmonton area. Geographical based community mapping groups cover most of the city and are committed to this local planning process. Social service government departments and non-profit agencies through their participation in community mapping processes are using more inclusive decision making processes which are expected to result in improved services to children and families.

About ESRI Canada:

Established in 1984, ESRI Canada is a Canadian owned company specializing in geographic information systems (GIS) solutions. ESRI Canada distributes the world's leading GIS software solutions from ESRI Inc., Miner and Miner, and Azteca. In order to provide organizations with complete industry-specific solutions ESRI Canada has established an extensive business partner program that includes more than 125 Canadian organizations. ESRI Canada also provides professional services including consulting, training, technical support, and enterprise GIS implementation. ESRI Canada is a leader in providing world-class enterprise GIS solutions for many industries including local government, utilities, public safety and defence, business demographics, education, natural resources, and transportation. ESRI Canada has fifteen regional offices across the country, with headquarters in Toronto, Ontario. For more information, please visit <http://www.esricanada.com/> or call 1-800-447-9778.

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Media contacts:

Heather Adams
Communications Specialist
ESRI Canada
T: 416-386-6463
E: hadams@esricanada.com
W: www.esricanada.com

Deborah Morrison
Coordinator
M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region
T: 780-474-9393
E: maps.deb@telus.net
W: www.mapsalbertacapitalregion.ca