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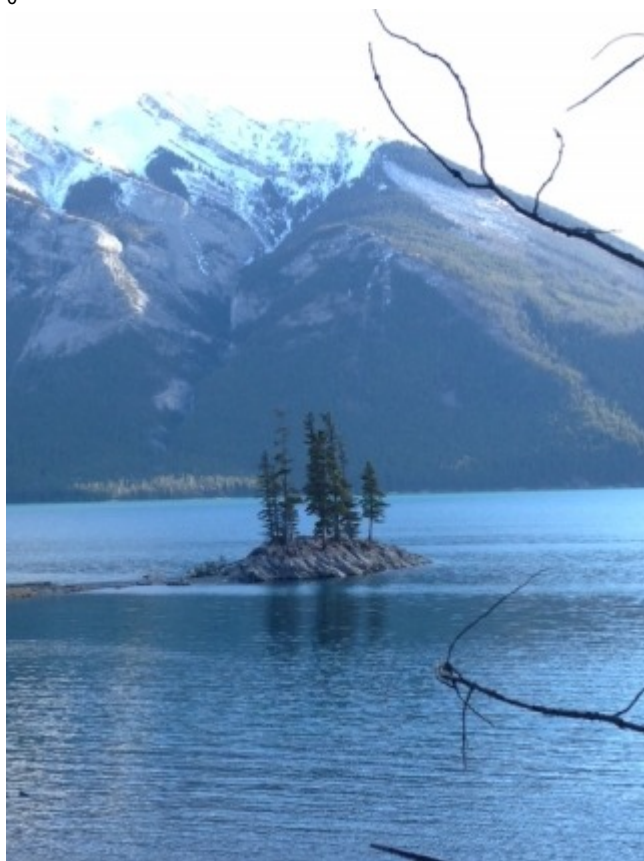
LWF is building CBM bridges!

News

LWF

November 24, 2016

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Lake Minnewanka, in Banff National Park. Its Nakoda name means "water of the spirits." Photo: Kirsten Earl McCorrister

LWF has been hard at work coordinating a new community-based monitoring (CBM) program here in Manitoba, having recently completed a CBM pilot project to test for phosphorus in the tributaries that feed into Lake Winnipeg. We are not alone in our efforts to understand and improve the health of our waters. Across Canada, water groups are collaborating with citizens and governments to understand the threats to clean water and work for solutions. LWF has had the opportunity to participate in two exciting initiatives that connect our work and knowledge with our national peers.

In early November, LWF attended the North American Lakes Management Society (NALMS) conference in Banff. As part of this conference, [Living Lakes Canada](#) – a cross-Canada network focused on water protection through citizen action – hosted a one-day session called *Building Bridges: Citizens, Science and Policy* that had a special focus on CBM programs across Canada and the United States.

LWF had two representatives in the day's panel sessions who shared the lessons we have learned while monitoring phosphorus in the sub-watersheds of Seine-Rat River and LaSalle-Redboine areas. LWF science advisor Dr. Greg McCullough described the process of creating standard protocols for testing and shared some initial results. Claire Herbert, the coordinator of the Canadian Watershed Information Network (formally Lake Winnipeg Information Network), explained some of the challenges and solutions related to housing and sharing data back to community partners in an accessible but comprehensive way. After spending the day with over 60 participants working on citizen science projects, we left with new connection and renewed energy to move forward with CBM programming in Manitoba.

Additionally, over the past year, LWF has been participating in the creation of a report on CBM initiatives in Canada called [Realizing the Potential of Community Based Monitoring in Assessing the Health of Our Waters](#).

This report was created from the collective efforts of the Pooling Water Knowledge working group under the umbrella of [Our Living Waters](#), a collaborative network of organizations – LWF included – that are working together under a common strategic framework to achieve the ambitious goal of all waters in good health by 2030.

The report highlights the challenges and opportunities of CBM using five case studies, including a focus on LWF's efforts! It's an excellent resource for groups launching new CBM programs and also highlights the credibility of LWF's work within the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

Through both of these initiatives, several themes have emerged:

- Successful CBM programs must ensure not only that collected data is credible, but that the resources and expertise are in place to translate and communicate data to key decision-makers.
- There is a need for strong planning upfront so CBM participants know what they're monitoring, why they're monitoring it and what analyzed data will be used for.
- Systems that house data must be easily accessible and contain not just numbers, but context for what those numbers mean in terms of environmental impacts.
- Including citizens in a meaningful way will ensure for continued success of a CBM program.
- Connecting Indigenous knowledge and western science will bring out the strengths of both these understandings of water systems.

LWF is pleased that our emerging CBM program includes these key elements of success.

With the expert guidance of our Science Advisory Council and input from other experts, our plans for 2017 are to expand Manitoba's CBM program to new regions, work closely with conservation districts, engage directly with citizens, develop an educational stream of the program to create CBM opportunities for schools and student groups, and start to engage with decision-makers.

CBM falls under [Action 4](#) of the [Lake Winnipeg Health Plan](#), Monitoring our Waterways. You can learn more about our CBM efforts [here](#).

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