

SDSN Canada Members Meeting

June 16th, 2021, 1-3pm EDT

The SDSN Canada Members Meeting was hosted online using Zoom and included 16 Canadian post-secondary institutions with a total of 52 participants.

The meeting featured the current state of the SDGs in Canada, emerging opportunities for post-secondary institutions, networking breakout sessions, and a featured joint presentation by the Brookings Institution and Rockefeller Foundation on mobilizing campuses and communities for the SDGs using the [17 Rooms initiative](#). A lightning round of member initiatives was also included to highlight a portion of the breadth of SDG work happening across the network.

As a reminder, all faculty and staff at your institution or organization have access to the SDSN community, so encourage them to use [SDSN Mobilize](#) to stay informed about what SDSN Global and SDSN Canada are doing to advance the SDGs.

Meeting Highlights

- The SDSN Global annual [Sustainable Development Report 2021](#) was released June 2021, tracking progress on the SDGs by country (Canada ranked 21st in the world). The report outlines the short-term impacts of COVID-19 on the SDGs and describes how the SDGs can frame the recovery.
- The Government of Canada has released Canada's National Strategy for the SDGs, [Moving Forward Together](#). The strategy outlines a set of 30 actions towards the SDGs, including localizing the SDGs, supporting partnerships with Indigenous initiatives, and advancing research into the gaps in Canada's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- [The 17 Rooms initiative](#) is a tool for advancing SDG collaboration, community-centric conversations, and bottom-up action. There are three key principles of consideration:
 - Every SDG gets a seat at the table (a dedicated room).
 - Identify what the **next step** is, and not the perfect step. What are things you can do together over the next 12 to 18 months that you can implement action on the SDGs?
 - It is about conversations, not presentations. The goal is to learn from each other and create a community of practice.

[Join the 17 Rooms-X Community of Practice for free and get access to the beta toolkit with details on how to run a 17 Rooms event.](#)

- A 'lightning round' of presentations by members spotlighting SDG work from Colleges and Institutes Canada, the Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Operationalization of Sustainable Development (CIRODD), Vancouver Island University, the University of Saskatchewan, and the University of Waterloo.
- SDSN Canada is looking to be more intentional about the network's collective presence and impact. What we can do together to advance the SDGs in Canada, what do we each want to get out of the network, and what can we each give to the network? In the spirit of these questions, three points were discussed for membership participation:
 - [A relaunch of the Member Challenge](#) as a way to inspire and challenge the membership for action on the SDGs.
 - A reminder that the 'SDG Teaching Community' initiative is launching and to forward faculty contacts at your institution who are teaching about the SDGs that would be interested to participate.
 - An invitation was extended for interested members to join a small working group to reflect on and contribute to a revised governance structure for SDSN Canada in order to better incorporate leadership from the membership in setting the network's agenda.

Network Update

Presented by Dean Jean Andrey, SDSN Canada Chair

SDSN Global mobilizes the academic sector to achieve the SDGs through

- **Engaging and Growing Networks** – the SDSN community continues to grow rapidly, with over 1,300 members worldwide and more than 40 national/regional SDSN chapters.
- **Online Education tool: [The SDG Academy](#)** – works with academic institutions to bring sustainability education into programs and curriculums. They have recently launched a [Community of Practice](#), giving SDSN members priority access to all SDG Academy content to be used in their own course offerings.

- **Pathways Research** – SDSN maps out pathways for how we can achieve the 2030 Agenda, and they mobilize networks and teams to fill identified needs. Example projects include the [FABLE Consortium](#) and [SDG data and statistics](#).
- **Monitoring and Progress** – The annual [Sustainable Development Report 2021](#) was released in June to track progress on the SDGs and analyze key issues in sustainable development. The report outlines the short-term impacts of COVID-19 on the SDGs and describes how the SDGs can frame the recovery. It also profiles all 193 countries to view how they perform on each SDG.

Canada is ranked overall 21st worldwide, with an index score of 79.2. It has achieved SDG 4, quality education, but continues to see challenges in many other areas. The four SDGs identified as major challenges for Canada include 12, 13, 15, and 17.

A review of work and developments happening in the Canadian context and the SDSN Canada chapter

- **SDG Reporting** – The Federal SDG Unit released the [Moving Forward Together](#) report earlier this year. The report outlines an SDG implementation plan, fact sheets, and a set of 30 actions towards the SDGs that are particularly relevant to the work of SDSN members. Examples include localizing the SDGs and sharing best practices, supporting partnerships with Indigenous initiatives, and advancing research into the gaps in Canada's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- Localization continues to gain momentum in Canada. [The city of Kelowna is the first municipality in Canada to create a Voluntary Local Review \(VLR\)](#) and track its progress on the SDGs. More localization work is happening across Canada, in partnership with local SDSN participating institutions.
- **Post-Secondary Institutions** – Higher education institutions are making heightened SDG-related commitments at an accelerating rate, an indication that SDGs are becoming more mainstream in the academic world. Similarly, more institutions are regularly reporting progress, but University Voluntary Reviews need to become more commonplace. The [Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#) listed 15 Canadian Universities amongst the top 100 in the world for action on the SDGs, with Queen's University leading Canadian Universities ranked overall at number 5.
- **SDSN Canada** – A regional chapter of the SDSN global network. The Canadian Chapter has a couple of key themes around which it is focusing its strategic direction and initiatives:
 - **Galvanizing support** - SDSN Canada has plans to host the [Together|Ensemble Conference](#) tentatively in the Winter 2022 season.

- **Cultivating high-quality SDG education** - 15 individuals from the SDSN Canada network have been trained as moderators to host "[The World's Future](#)" SDG simulation. A social simulation that incorporates the 2030 goals and empowers players to experience how interconnected the global goals are and what the consequences are of their decisions.
- **Advancing SDG centered research agenda** - Ongoing work on the SDGs Cities Index, which will be an online platform for open data sharing to assess how cities are doing on the SDGs
- **SDSN Canada Membership** – Membership has grown to 50 members in Canada, 29 universities, 7 colleges, and 14 other institutes.

Use [SDSN Mobilize](#) to stay informed about what SDSN Global and SDSN Canada are doing to advance the SDGs.

17 Rooms Initiative

Presented by: John McArthur, Brookings Institution & Zia Khan, the Rockefeller Foundation

[Join the 17 Rooms-X Community of Practice for free and get access to the beta toolkit with details on how to run a 17 Rooms event.](#)

[The 17 Rooms initiative](#) was first launched by the Brookings Institution and the Rockefeller Foundation in September 2018 as an experiment in stimulating new forms of collective action for the SDGs. It is a tool for advancing SDG collaboration by creating a platform for problem solving as a complement to other major policy and research SDG actions underway. 17 Rooms works to make the SDGs feel less overwhelming by generating community-centric conversations and spawning actions that are most appropriate for your community.

There are three key principles of consideration in implementing the 17 Rooms:

- Every SDG gets a seat at the table (a dedicated room).
- Identify what the **next step** is, and not the perfect step. What actions are big enough to matter but small enough to get done? Focused on areas you can do together over the next 12 to 18 months to make a difference on an SDG.
- It is about conversations, not presentations. The goal is to learn from each other, participate, and build new lasting relationships.

Universities in particular have adopted the 17 Rooms approach to unite their big, complex campus communities. Examples of this include Carnegie Mellon creating a [Voluntary University Review](#), Georgia Tech creating their new Strategic Plan, and Tecnológico de Monterrey focusing on partnerships with external stakeholders.

Elisabeth Rees-Johnstone (Executive Director of Continuing Education and Professional Learning at OISE) at the University of Toronto gave a follow-up presentation on the UofT experience running 17 Rooms. Elisabeth stressed the value of 17 Rooms as a way to develop further awareness for sustainability and to unite a segmented campus for professional learning and development. The UofT event focused on bringing faculty and researchers together to understand how they might advance sustainable development and the SDGs within UofT's teaching and research work.

Since the 17 Rooms event, there have been a variety of new collaborations between faculty and there have been institutional commitments to create strategic initiatives with a focus on advancing the SDGs and sustainability more broadly. The 17 Rooms approach at UofT injected exuberance, collaboration, energy, and an appreciative inquiry approach into the conversations.

Lightning Round of Member Initiatives

In recognition of the important and enriching work being led by members, a 'lightning round' was featured to spotlight SDG work happening across the network and to inspire further action among Canada's post-secondary community. Five members were invited to present, each speaking for three minutes.

We recognize that there are many other member initiatives to profile and we plan to find ways to showcase more work happening across the membership over the coming months.

Colleges and Institutes Canada - Judi Varga-Toth, Manager of ImpAct Partnerships

- Revamped Strategic Plan to include an emphasis on the SDGs, particularly SDG 5, 8, 10, and 13.
- Created the [SDG toolkit](#) which can be used by members as an open education resource to learn about practical ways to implement the SDGs on campus.
- Ran the [ImpAct Internships program](#) to help employers advance priorities that align with the SDGs and encourage Canadian youth to become SDG ambassadors.
- Signatory of the [SDG Accord](#) and working with members to encourage them to adopt the principles laid out in the accord.
- Serves as the [pan-Canadian UNEVOC Centre and the lead for the North American cluster of centres](#), bringing technical and vocational education and training providers together to build SDG capacity.
- Have launched this year:
 - Presidents' Advisory Committee on Sustainability, consisting of 12 presidents and directors of member institutions across the country.
 - Massive ImpAct, a five-year project focused on greenhouse gas emission reduction.
 - Leading the Way to a Net Zero Carbon Future, a position paper on the education sector's role in meeting Canada's goal of a net-zero economy by 2050.

Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Operationalization of Sustainable Development (CIRODD)

- Luce Beaulieu, Executive Director

- Hosting the [Summer School in Societal Transformation](#), a summer school focused on the acquisition of key competencies for the SDGs. Collaborating with SDSN members at Acadia, ULaval, and Concordia.
- Hosted the Sustainable Innovation Summit in Fall 2020, bringing researchers in Quebec together. Included a research project to embed the SDGs in sustainable innovation (later presented to the Government of Quebec) as well as the 'Decade of Action' panel to explore integrating the SDGs in Quebec.

Vancouver Island University - Pam Shaw, Director of the Community Planning Department

- Initiated ~100 meetings with faculty members across campus, as well as three large scale community events, and created a strategy to advance the SDGs.
- Planning a Symposium of Planners for Vancouver Island planners and First Nations communities to explore localizing the SDGs.
- Planning a campus launch for the World's Future Online SDG Simulation.
- Planning a video series highlighting both current initiatives and the future of the SDGs at VIU.

University of Saskatchewan - Meghna Ramaswamy, Director of the International Office

- Hosted the [People Around the World \(PAW\) conference](#), an annual event bringing faculty, staff, and students to exchange research, applied knowledge, and lived experience to advance the SDGs.
- Launched a [new University Strategic Plan](#), centering principles of the SDGs throughout coupled with strong commitments to help fulfil the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Participating in an International Research and SDGs Working Table through the Ministry of Advanced Education in the Government of Saskatchewan.
- Working with the City of Saskatoon to advance climate action.

University of Waterloo - Mathew Thijssen, Director of Sustainability

- Officially [declared a climate emergency](#), and has enacted reforms as a result, which include integrating climate considerations in portfolio investments, teaching, research, and practice, as well as a consideration for reducing overall carbon intensity.
- Launch of a new program on sustainability and financial management to address the sustainability transitions the world is going through.
- Sustainability and the SDGs embedded in different parts of the University Strategic Plan.
- Collaborating with the University of Saskatchewan to share insights on mapping of research SDG alignment on campus as a learning tool to share more widely throughout the SDSN community.



Invitation for Member Participation

Presented by Dean Jean Andrey, SDSN Canada Chair and Jon Beale, SDSN Canada Manager

SDSN is looking to be more intentional about the network's collective presence and impact. What we can do together to advance the SDGs in Canada, what do we each want to get out of the network, and what can we each give to the network?

In the spirit of these questions, three points were discussed for membership participation:

- [A relaunch of the Member Challenge](#) as a way to inspire and challenge the membership for action on the SDGs. Follow-up conversations will be sought out throughout the year to profile how members have taken up the challenge.
- A reminder that the 'SDG Teaching Community' initiative is launching and to forward contacts of faculty at your institution who are teaching about the SDGs that would be interested to participate. This will be a community of Canadian faculty from across the network to convene to share information and resources on best practice for teaching the SDGs.
- An invitation was extended for interested members to join a small working group to reflect on and contribute to a revised governance structure for SDSN Canada in order to better incorporate leadership from the membership in setting the network's agenda.