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UNB, Brazilian institute partner on land project

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for The Daily Gleaner

PROJECT LAUNCH:

(THE DAILY GLEANER/JESSICA FINDLAY PHOTO)

From left, UNB professor Marcelo Santos, Fredericton MP Andy Scott and UNB president John McLaughlin mark the launch of a national geospatial project Tuesday.

If one map shows property lines on the right, but another map doesn't, which one is correct?

That's one of the problems the National Geospatial Framework Project hopes to solve.

After two years of planning, Tuesday marked the official launch of the $7.3-million project between the University of New Brunswick and the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica in Brazil.

"At the core of this project is geospatial information," said project team leader Marcelo Santos, a professor of geodesy and geomatics engineering at UNB.

Geospatial information is any type of information that has a position associated with it, such as maps, global positioning systems and property lines.

Obtained via satellite technology, geospatial information precisely identifies the location of natural or artificial physical characteristics on Earth, said Santos.

A national geospatial framework, based on satellite technology, unifies the co-ordinate systems in Brazil, providing the foundation for a system that clearly and accurately identifies land holdings.

The four-year project, with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), will make geospatial information widely available in Brazil to all levels of government, industry, business and private citizens.

This information will improve mismatches between national, regional and municipal maps, leading to land reform.

"In Brazil, land reform is a very important issue," said Santos.

That country's current land registry is irregular.

Moving to a land registry based on geospatial information helps solve land conflicts, often involving displaced indigenous people.

"Brazil is a place where land conflicts often become real conflict," he said.

"Physical security, including the physical demarcation of property boundaries, legal recognition and public registration are all elements of land ownership that provide citizens with the tools to actively participate in Brazil's social and economic development," said Santos.

The project framework will also provide safety by preventing tragedies.

In 1984, 93 people died due to inaccurate information of a gas pipeline location during an excavation in the Brazilian state of Sao Paulo. This wouldn't happen if everyone had the same information, he said.

"This is another example of New Brunswick helping the world," said Fredericton MP Andy Scott.

"We're working together to thrive and survive."

With more than 30 Brazilian partners involved, the project is also funded by Natural Resources Canada, Service New Brunswick, Centre for Property Studies, WaterMark Industries, Trainer Surveys and Optex.