

2021 Partnership Update

Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre and Brock University

On August 13, 2019, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre (NFAMC) and Brock University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to solidify their continued collaboration to improve the well-being of newcomers to Canada in the Niagara region. This community-academia alliance aims to address localized newcomer challenges and broader equity, diversity, and inclusion issues through a variety of interdisciplinary projects. Together they are working towards reducing barriers for diverse and marginalized communities in Niagara. The partnership represents Brock's commitments to community engagement, knowledge mobilization, experiential learning, and a mutually shared priority to foster a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Projects and Initiatives in 2021

While the COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for in-person collaboration, both Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre and Brock University have been dynamic in their response to the pandemic and successfully worked together on several key collaborations in 2021.

NFAMC and Brock University supported each other in several ways in 2021 that support their shared priority of addressing challenges faced by newcomers and larger issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion through acts of service. Initiatives included:

Service

- Brock University participated in NFAMC's Mentorship Program events to provide additional support and opportunities for newcomers.
- The Executive Director, Human Rights and Equity served as Brock University's representative on NFAMC's Board of Directors. This partnership facilitated opportunities to identify and address issues of equity and inclusion.
- Abdul Rahimi (Director, Goodman Group) began serving as Brock University's representative and Co-Chair of the Regional Afghan Resettlement Committee.
- NFAMC participated in Brock University's Orientation Week by hosting an information booth at the Brock International Office.
- NFAMC participated in Volunteer Fest at Brock University to create increased awareness about volunteer opportunities at NFAMC. Volunteer opportunities were also posted on Brock University's ExperienceBU website.
- Brock University staff and faculty led conversation lectures and circles with newcomers through University Cafés at NFAMC satellite locations.

- Brock University staff worked with NFAMC to provide advice and support to newcomers looking to upgrade or begin new educational pathways.
- NFAMC added their support to Dr. Liette Vasseur's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Race, Gender and Diversity Initiative grant application.
- NFAMC's Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Coordinator worked in close collaboration with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisor at Brock University.

Student Experiential Learning

Student experiential learning provides unique opportunities for students at the university to gain real world experience as part of their studies. The partnership between Brock University and NFAMC continues to provide unique opportunities for students to learn while also supporting the critically important work NFAMC does in the Niagara community. Below is a summary of student experiential learning opportunities that NFAMC facilitated in 2021.

- NFAMC facilitated internships for students enrolled in Political Science Internship (POLI4P95) and Citizen Politics (POLI4P12)
- A seminar was facilitated between students enrolled in Global Migration: Canada in a Comparative Context (POLI4P16) and newcomers enrolled in ESL classes at NFAMC.
- Students studying political science under Professor Tosutti's facilitated networking opportunities with ESL students at NFAMC.
- NFAMC collaborated with students studying at the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts to represent issues affecting the newcomer community.

Other Partnership Activities

NFAMC and Brock University continue to look for ways to increase collaboration to produce mutually beneficial outcomes for Niagara. In 2021, this expansion of programming included 14 workshops delivered via NFAMC for Brock International students that focused on information related to settlement services available to international students. This collaboration, also in partnership with COSTI, is an excellent example of leveraging local expertise to benefit students at the university and recognizing the symbiotic relationship between Brock University and NFAMC.

Upcoming Projects and Initiatives in 2022

Brock University and NFAMC will continue to work closely together in 2022 to contribute to the well-being of Niagara. Specific initiatives and programs have been identified as opportunities to continue to advance the partnership between Brock and NFAMC. These include:

Service

2022 will present many opportunities for NFAMC and Brock University to support each other's

work and establish new ways in which the relationship between the university and NFAMC can continue to grow. Specifically, identified opportunities for service in 2022 include:

- Brock will continue to explore how the university can support the settlement of Afghan refugees in the Niagara region through active participation on the Regional Afghan Resettlement Committee.
- Brock University staff will explore ways to support NFAMC's 2SLGBTQIA+ and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion programming.
- NFAMC will utilize their unique insight and expertise to support the identification of candidates to serve on Brock University's Board of Directors.
- By participating in Brock University's Orientation(s) and Volunteer Fest NFAMC hopes to create volunteer opportunities for students. Volunteer opportunities could also be promoted on Brock's ExperienceBU website.
- Explore opportunities to engage in social enterprise activities through Brock LINC. NFAMC will also look to support Brock LINC in their pursuit of funding to facilitate social enterprise opportunities at Brock University.
- Further explore opportunities for collaboration with the Goodman Group.

Student Experience

NFAMC will continue to host a practicum placement for POLI4P95 students, providing them with a unique political internship opportunity and will explore opportunities to expand student experiential learning at NFAMC, including marketing and communications students engaging with the Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Festival.

Other Partnership Activities

2021's partnership activities that included 14 workshops delivered via NFAMC in partnership with COSTI for Brock International students presented exciting opportunities to leverage local expertise to improve the experience of Brock students. In 2022, initiatives like this partnership will continue to be explored with the goal of expanding to establish new programs and partnerships as they continue to provide invaluable support to students.