

YWCA Niagara Region

2022 PARTNERSHIP UPDATE



- ▲ *Brock Assistant Professor of Political Science Joanne Heritz shared preliminary results of the research project she headed with the Niagara Community Observatory at an event June 22. The NCO and YWCA Niagara Region created a partnership to study affordable housing for women in Niagara.*

After years of collaboration, Brock University and the YWCA Niagara Region formalized their partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Friday, March 4, 2022. The agreement between the two organizations represents a mutual goal of empowering local women and improving the lives of their families. This collaborative partnership reflects Brock's commitment to community engagement, knowledge mobilization, experiential learning, and research to increase support for women in the Niagara region and their families.

Projects and Initiatives in 2022

YWCA Niagara Region and Brock University spent the year sharing their expertise and resources for the mutual benefit of one another. The two organizations created various research, service, and experiential learning opportunities that support the social and economic well-being of women and their families. Signing a Memorandum of Understanding was an exciting milestone, allowing the two organizations to continue empowering local women and improving the lives of their families together.

Research

YWCA Niagara Region and Brock worked in partnership on numerous studies and co-created research in 2022 with faculty across the University, including:

Improving Safe and Affordable Housing for Women in Niagara, Before and After COVID-19

- This community-engaged research partnership with the YWCA Niagara Region and Brock's Niagara Community Observatory (NCO) was informed by the lived expertise of women facing homelessness in Niagara and resulted in the creation of [NCO Policy Brief #54](#).
- The purpose of the project was to address the YWCA Niagara Region's Strategic Plan for addressing Housing and Advocacy, which aligned with the NCO's objective of reporting on timely policy issues in Niagara.
- This project heightened the awareness for the struggles of women with intersectional barriers of Indigeneity, race, disability, and gender face in accessing safe and affordable housing in Niagara.
- Brock faculty members include Faculty of Social Science's Professor Charles Conteh and Joanne Heritz, and the Faculty of Health Sciences' Professor Kathy Moscou.

Homeless Children's Experiences of Living in Transitional Housing

- Initiative led by Professor Rebecca Raby and Professor Christine Tardif- Williams from Brock's Department of Child and Youth Studies, and Brock University PhD Student Erika Alegria from Brock's Early Childhood Education Program.
- Brock's Social Justice Research Institute worked to support the research grant led by Rebecca Raby to learn more about children's experiences in transitional housing.

- This research grant funded project aims to learn about children's experiences in traditional housing and will be conducted until 2025.

Service

YWCA Niagara Region and Brock University supported each other through acts of service in 2022 to improve the well-being and safety of women and children in the Niagara Region:

- Brock's Women in Leadership will be supporting the planning and hosting of next year's Niagara Leadership Summit for Women. The first joint committee meeting was convened in November 2022. The joint committee involves staff and student participants from multiple units across Brock including Women in Leadership, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Student Life and Success, and Professional and Continuing Studies.
- Meaghan Rusnell (Associate Vice-President of Government, Community & International Relations), Shawna Chen (Associate Professor, Entrepreneurship), and Joanne Heritz (Assistant Professor, Political Science), served as Directors on the YWCA Niagara Region's Board of Directors.
- Brock's Department of Child and Youth Studies provides one to three students weekly to support the YWCA's children's after school program.
- Brock Schmon Tower was illuminated in blue to show support and raise awareness around prevention and protection regarding human trafficking.

Student Experiential Learning

Student experiential learning provides unique opportunities for students at the university to gain real world experience as a part of their studies.

In 2022, the partnership between YWCA Niagara Region and Brock University included:

- The Political Science Internship course (POLI 4P95) collaborated with the YWCA Niagara Region on mapping municipal housing policies in Niagara. The student involved created a report of housing policies in municipal official plans, community improvement plans and housing committees.

- After having such a successful co-op term, Biochemistry student Brynne Horan was hired on for a permanent position as a Youth Facilitator at YWCA Niagara Region.

Next Steps

Brock University and YWCA Niagara Region will continue to work closely together towards mutually beneficial outcomes in 2023. Initiatives and potential collaborations have already been identified to advance the partnership between Brock and YWCA Niagara Region in the upcoming calendar year.

Specifically, 2023 will see the YWCA Niagara Region's Niagara Leadership Summit for Women return to an in-person event, which will be co-hosted by Brock's Women in Leadership.

In addition, student experiential learning opportunities have been identified through co-op education and experiential education. Dean Ingrid Makus of the Faculty of Social Sciences plans to engage a student for the 2023 winter semester to assist in the planning and execution of the summit. In terms of experiential education, there is a placement beginning in January 2023 through the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences.