



# Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Year-in-Review 2022

## Partnership Overview

It seems like just yesterday that initial conversations were occurring about the potential collaboration between the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre (ESRC) and the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC). In fact, the partnership has been in place for almost five years. Five years provides a good amount of time for reflection on what has been accomplished and learned. Achievements of the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Initiative (EESI) are impressive and include:

- The development of an Environmental Stewardship Plan that will guide the NPC over the next decade and a very long list of action items were identified.
- An Environmental Stewardship Speaker Series that widely mobilized knowledge around stewardship efforts currently underway in Niagara Parks and elsewhere.
- Conducting a Climate Readiness Plan with consultations occurring across the NPC.

This year, the EESI Team initiated a literature review and compilation of secondary data from relevant sources to aid in designing the invasive species strategy. The strategy includes the creation of an invasive species database specific to Niagara Parks as well as a three pronged approach i.e., citizen science, compilation of best practices on invasive species management, and continuing monitoring and evaluation. A working field meeting was held on November 23 with NPC'S Corey Burant and Duane Haining to confirm goals and objectives of the invasive species strategy and plan next steps for the remainder of the year.

These initiatives have been complemented by a long and distinguished list of Master of Sustainability student research projects, with the results being published in international and national scholarly literature. None of these achievements would be possible without the collective efforts of a very special group of dedicated people - you know who you are - and, please know how much I cherish every opportunity to collaborate with you on our environmental stewardship efforts.

Ryan Plummer, Director of the ESRC and Chair of EESI

## Experiential Education Opportunities for Brock Students

### Field Trips Across the Niagara Parks

Students in the Master of Sustainability Program had multiple opportunities to travel throughout Niagara Parks to learn about stewardship sites within the parks and work undertaken by the partnership. First, in April, students enrolled in SSAS 5P03 were taken on a tour of the newly-opened Niagara Power Station as well as the Usshers Creek Coastal Wetland Project Site and the Chippawa Battlefield grasslands. In November, a new cohort of Master of Sustainability students got to visit these stewardship sites, as well as tour the Upper Whirlpool Woods and the Niagara Glen.



# Research & Knowledge Mobilization Activities

## Research Overview Report and Infographic

This year, a report of all the research conducted throughout the EESI partnership was created. The report summarized thesis research done by students as well as research completed by Brock University Professors, and grants that enabled research to be done within Niagara Parks. An accompanying infographic (right) was created to highlight the extensive research completed through the partnership.

The report highlights the internationally recognized research that is occurring through this partnership and exemplifies Niagara Parks as a leader in environmental stewardship and innovative research.



## Climate Readiness Lunch and Learn Event

This lunch and learn event, led by Ryan Plummer and Shannon Heaney, was presented to about 20 of Niagara Parks' senior staff to introduce the Climate Readiness Plan, specifically focusing on the plan's objectives and implementation process. Senior staff were extremely engaged with the plan, and had many reflections upon questions that provided feedback for both the Niagara Parks Commission and the Brock EESI team.



## Master of Sustainability Thesis Research

On August 31, Savannah Stuart successfully defended her thesis research titled "Exploring people-place relationships through place attachment and wellbeing in the context of the abrupt social and ecological change associated with the COVID-19 pandemic". Savannah's research took place throughout the Niagara Region and was supervised by Ryan Plummer.



## Additional Projects and Events in 2022 and Continuing into 2023

The EESI team is working with other graduate students in the ESRC to identify areas of overlap with Major Research Paper and thesis research interests and the invasive species program in Niagara Parks. Overlapping research interests will provide greater detail and in-depth research on specific areas of the invasive species program and will illustrate the collaborative power of the partnership.



In 2023, the invasive species program will continue to grow with the hopes of incorporating a citizen science event, creating a database of invasive species in Niagara Parks, and sharing information and education about invasive species.

