

Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Year-in-Review 2020

Environmental Stewardship Action Plan

Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) released their strategic plan in 2018 and it highlights the importance of stewardship. A multi-year planning process was thus initiated as a foundation to the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Initiative (EESI). An inventory and situational analysis were initially carried out to determine 'where we are'. Consultation and engagement with NPC staff were then undertaken to figure out 'where we want to go' as well as 'how we will get there'. This involved multiple workshops with staff from across NPC that were facilitated by Brock faculty and students. These collective efforts culminated in March, 2020 when the Commission formally adopted the Strategic Plan for Environmental Stewardship. The Plan is accompanied by an operational 'action plan' and monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Inaugural Environmental Stewardship Speaker Series

This series took place every Wednesday in October of 2020 and speakers included Brian Kon, Dr. Jessica Blythe, Elizabeth Hendriks, and Adam Shoalts. The topics ranged from traditional ecological knowledge, sustainability, and climate change, to anthropogenic impacts on the natural environment. The virtual series attracted nearly 190 people who registered for the inaugural event and each individual evening was very well attended. Several blog posts were written about each speaker by Research Assistants at Brock and can be found [here](#). The highlights

from a survey that was sent out to participants include:

- The top three ways attendees heard about the series were through social media (27%), the Niagara Parks website (27%), and friends or family (22%);
- 84% of people said they would attend another online environmental speaker series, and 40% said they would attend a live version when it's safe to do so;
- Nearly all participants said they "extremely" or "very much" enjoyed the event



Speakers from left to right: Dr. Adam Shoalts, Brian Kon, Elizabeth Hendriks, and Dr. Jessica Blythe

Experiential Education Opportunities for Brock Students

On November 16th, 2020, members from the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre presented virtually to Master of Sustainability students in their Foundations of Sustainability Science course (SSAS 5P01) about the Centre's seven innovative community partnerships. The presentation focused on how the partnerships allow Brock students, faculty, and staff to collaborate with partners to move knowledge into action to make an impact within the community. They also discussed the importance of applying transdisciplinary ways of thinking and knowing to generate solutions to complex problems that community partners face.



Research & Knowledge Mobilization Activities

Partnership Roundtable Events

Roundtable 1: July 15, 2020

Roundtable events have become an important part of translating knowledge into action. At this roundtable, participants were provided with an overview of partnership successes to date utilizing an infographic (right), which was followed by two presentations. The first by Dr. Baird who presented the results from her research on “Exploring the Environmental Stewardship Network of the Niagara Parks Commission.” The second by Dr. Blythe presented the results from her research on “Measuring the Human Dimensions of Niagara Parks.” The presentation of these research projects, supported by the NPC, provided a robust discussion for NPC staff.



BEST PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC TRAIL USE



Roundtable 2: October 20, 2020

A second roundtable was held in October 2020 to discuss how Niagara Parks can navigate the increased use of greenspaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the event, Brock University's master's students, Samantha Witkowski and John Foster, presented their research pertaining to greenspaces within Niagara Parks. More information about this roundtable can be found [here](#).



Master of Sustainability Thesis Research

“An Examination of Stakeholder Perceptions in Conventional and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of Environmental Management”

Samantha Witkowski, Master of Sustainability Candidate

Samantha's research focused on examining stakeholder perceptions of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for environmental management. She undertook her research in two parts. The first study involved understanding group differences in the perceptions of KPIs for the management of viewpoints across the Niagara Parkway using a conventional M&E approach. The second study examined the influence of engaging in a participatory M&E approach on stakeholder perceptions of KPIs for the Niagara Glen Trails. Overall, the findings from both studies suggest that stakeholder perceptions of KPIs can be significantly different depending on the environmental contexts and M&E approach used. Beyond providing a better understanding of group differences in perceptions of environmental management actions throughout Niagara Parks, Samantha's research highlights the importance and practical use of including stakeholder perceptions in M&E and environmental management, alongside ecological data, to provide a more comprehensive picture of management strategies.

For more information visit: brocku.ca/esrc/environmental-stewardship-initiative