

Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative Year-in-Review 2020

Partnership Overview & Launch

The purpose of this initiative is to establish a vibrant cooperative partnership between Brock University, The Ontario Trails Council (OTC), and The Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) with an initial five-year program of operations. This partnership will concentrate on the following:

- Conduct a needs assessment within the first year of operations in concert with the trails master planning process;
- Hold public events in Niagara Parks each year to promote, mobilize knowledge and engage visitors in trail assets and tourism;
- Engage graduate and undergraduate students in trail issues and initiatives in Niagara Parks;
- Explore and pursue mutually beneficial opportunities of shared interest such as grant proposals, community forums, etc.



Photo: Official partnership launch held on March 12, 2020 at Legends on the Niagara Golf Complex. In attendance were representatives from both Brock University and the Niagara Parks Commission, including Brock University Provost, Greg Finn (front left) and Chair of the Niagara Parks Commission, Sandie Bellows.

Experiential Education Opportunities for Brock Students

- The number of visitors to the Niagara Glen have become alarming and required immediate attention. Research assistant, John Foster (MA Candidate in Applied Health Sciences), has collaborated with Corey Burant (NPC) regarding visitor use challenges on the Niagara Glen trails. A draft report summarizing and proposing solutions was completed in November 2020.
- Dr. Hutson was successful in securing a MITACS Research Training Award for \$6,000. This award will support the involvement of John Foster (MA Candidate).
- John Foster presented summer trails assessment research on the Niagara Glen Nature Reserve during an NPC Roundtable in October to representatives of Niagara Parks.
- On November 16th, 2020, members from the ESRC presented virtually to Master of Sustainability students in their Foundations of Sustainability Science course about the Centre's seven innovative community partnerships. The presentation focused on how they allow Brock students, faculty, and staff to collaborate with partners to move knowledge into action to make an impact within the community.



Knowledge Mobilization Activities

Best Practices for Communicating Parks & Trail Safety

Part 1: Brock News Story & Infographic July 2020

Due to higher demands for public spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trail Assets and Tourism research team pivoted in spring 2020 and focused attention on examining best practices for communicating trail safety and use policies to the public. With the help of the Niagara Parks Commission and the Ontario Trails Council, a thorough review was completed analyzing the responses of other agencies and their COVID-19 communications. With this evidence-based research in hand, the Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative team published a list of best practices, which was highlighted through the infographic (on right) and a full [Brock News Story](#).

Part 2: Trail Etiquette Video July 2020

In July of 2020, Niagara Parks reminds all trail users to follow trail etiquette with [an educational video](#) so that everyone has an opportunity to connect with our natural environment in a safe way. John Foster was featured in the video highlighting the importance of minimizing human impact while using trails during the COVID-19 pandemic.



BEST PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC TRAIL USE



1 If you have COVID-19 symptoms, you must stay home and self-isolate. Consider getting tested. Do not use the trails.



2 Trail users must practise physical distancing. Stay at least 2 metres (6ft) apart and wear a face covering when physical distancing is not possible. Do not gather in large groups.



3 Be prepared for limited access to trail facilities. Garbage receptacles, washrooms and potable water may not be available.



4 Travel only on marked trails. The use of closed or unmarked trails is unsafe and may result in fines or penalties.



5 Practice 'Leave-No-Trace' principles while visiting the area.

- Plan ahead and prepare for your visit.
- Travel only on marked trails.
- Do not disturb wildlife or plants.
- Dispose of all waste properly.
- Be considerate of other trail users.



JOHN FOSTER
BROCK UNIVERSITY

John Foster, Master of Applied Health Science Candidate and Research Assistant working on the Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative participating in Niagara Parks Commission trails safety video.

Ontario Trails Council Webinar

October 2020

Representatives from Brock University's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre (ESRC) and the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences presented at the Ontario Trails Council webinar 'COVID-19 Research on Trails and Outdoor Recreation: What We've Learned So Far'. The webinar was moderated by Garrett Hutson, the faculty lead of the partnership, and master's candidate Jon Foster presented his research related to the partnership. More information about the webinar can be found [here](#).