

# Building Sustainable Communities: Creating Connections for the Future



# **BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: CREATING CONNECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Module 5: Creating Connections for the Future

RYAN PLUMMER; AMANDA SMITS; SAMANTHA WITKOWSKI;  
BRIDGET MCGLYNN; DEREK ARMITAGE; ELLA-KARI MUHL; AND  
JODI JOHNSTON



*Building Sustainable Communities: Creating Connections for the Future* by Ryan Plummer; Amanda Smits; Samantha Witkowski; Bridget McGlynn; Derek Armitage; Ella-Kari Muhl; and Jodi Johnston is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

This publication should be cited as:

Plummer, R., Smits, A., Witkowski, S., McGlynn, B., Armitage, D., Muhl, E.K., Johnston, J. 2022. Building Sustainable Communities: Creating Connections for the Future. <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/>

# CONTENTS

Course Introduction	1
Acknowledgements	2
The Teaching Team	v
Module 5 Introduction	ix
Learning Objectives	x

## Lesson 1: Making connections to engage

Lesson 1: Making Connections to Engage	13
Policies for Engagement	14
Ethical Considerations	15
Social Identities and Intersectionality	16
Power and Privilege	18
Representation	19
Problematic Histories of Engagement: The "White Saviour" Complex	20
Exploring Techniques and Technology for Collaboration and Engagement	22
Mobile Applications	23
Social Media and Community Engagement	25
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	27
Important Considerations for Engaging with Communities	29
Sustainable Communities in Action: Brock-Lincoln Living Lab	31
Sustainable Communities in Action: The Global Transition Movement	33

## Lesson 2: Future Considerations

Lesson 2: Future Considerations	37
Higher Education Institution- Community Engagement	38
Where to Go Next?	40
Future Opportunities	42

## Module 5 Reflection and Assessment

Module 5 Reflection and Assessment	45
Module 5 Learning Check	46
Module 5 Key Takeaways	47
Resources for Further Learning	48
Module 5 Assessment	51
Module 5 Assignment	52
References	53

# COURSE INTRODUCTION

---



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=4#oembed-1>*

All five modules can be found here:

Module 1: [Introduction to Community Engagement](#)

Module 2: [Information Gathering and Sharing](#)

Module 3: [Collaboration](#)

Module 4: [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)

Module 5: [Creating Connections for the Future](#)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

## About Us

This open access course was developed by members of the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre (ESRC) at Brock University. Located in St. Catharines, Ontario, the ESRC is a transformative and creative transdisciplinary community dedicated to research and education advancing environmental sustainability locally and globally. In working towards this mission, the ESRC:

- *encourages research excellence in environmental sustainability by faculty, librarians, and students;*
- *enables enriching educational experiences in environmental sustainability; and,*
- *engages in knowledge mobilization and fosters knowledge impacts.*

More information about the ESRC, including its undergraduate and graduate programming, is available [here](#).

The ESRC is uniquely positioned to create the five open access modules about Building Sustainability Communities: The Impact of Engagement. It is one of the few universities worldwide to be located in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. It is also deeply committed to the enterprise of sustainability science. Throughout the modules, you will see examples of how the ESRC, and our partners are working to build sustainable communities.

## Acknowledgements

Building Sustainability Communities: The Impact of Engagement, would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts and support of individuals at Brock University. Equally important are the many individuals beyond the campus who kindly agreed to take part in this project. We would like to express our appreciation to the following individuals for their input, support, and dedication to the project:

- *Brock University Team Members*
  - *Dr. Ryan Plummer (Project Lead), Professor and ESRC Director*
  - *Erica Harper, Research Assistant, ESRC*
  - *Jodi Johnston, Research Assistant, ESRC*
  - *Dr. Marilyne Jollineau, Associate Professor, ESRC*
  - *Bridget McGlynn, Research Assistant, ESRC*
  - *Amanda Smits (Project Manager), Centre Administrator, ESRC*



- *Savannah Stuart, Research Assistant, ESRC*
- *Samantha Witkowski, Partnerships Coordinator, ESRC*
- *Collaborating Partners*
  - *Derek Armitage: Professor, the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo (UW)*
  - *Ella-Kari Muhl: PhD Candidate, the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo*
  - *Jennifer Fresque-Baxter: Manager, Sustainable Livelihoods and Traditional Knowledge, On the Land Unit Environment and Natural Resources Government of the Northwest Territories*
  - *External Partner Leads of the [ESRC Innovative Partnerships](#)*
- *Brock University's Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI)*
  - *Dr. Madelyn Law, Associate Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning*
  - *Matt Clare, Associate Director, Technology Enabled Learning*
  - *Giulia Forsythe, Associate Director*

Our appreciation to Dr. Ingrid Makus, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Brock University who is supportive of introducing this course into the 2022/23 curricular offerings . We would also like to thank Kyle Mackie and Jodi Johnston who lent their expertise and talents to numerous pieces of this course.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to the following individuals who took the time to help create video content for this project:

- *Dr. Julia Baird, CRC (Tier II) in Human Dimensions of Water Resources and Water Resilience, Associate Professor, Environmental Sustainability Research Centre and the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies*
- *Corey Burant, Project Manager, Forest Health Parks, Planning & Properties, Niagara Parks Commission*
- *Kerry-Anne Charles, Cambium Indigenous Professional Services*
- *Madu Galappaththi, University of Waterloo*
- *Lowine Hill, University of Waterloo*
- *Jodi Johnston, York Region District Schoolboard*
- *Michael Kirkopoulos, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Lincoln*
- *Geoffrey Martynuik, Ecosystem Scientist and Marine Planner, Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, and Haida Heritage Site*
- *Shannon McKay, Director of Community Services, Town of Lincoln*
- *Simon J. Mitchell, VP Resilient Habitats, World Wildlife Fund-Canada*
- *Jayne Morrish, Knowledge Translation Officer, Brock University*

- *Ellen Savoia, Senior Manager, Environmental Planning, Niagara Parks Commission*
- *Dr. Liette Vasseur, Professor and UNESCO Chair in Community Sustainability, Brock University*
- *Dr. Ana Carolina Esteves Dias, Postdoctoral Fellow, School of the Environment, Enterprise and Development, University of Waterloo*

These videos could not have been created without the hard work of Brock TV, including Executive Director Matthew Scott and his wonderful team, who edited all videos and also assisted with some video production.

We would also like to thank Rachel Derrah, who provided all the introductory graphics throughout the course.

The ESRC would also like to thank the following reviewers whose constructive comments and feedback further enhanced the module content.

- *Dr. Jessica Blythe, Assistant Professor, Environmental Sustainability Research Centre, Brock University*
- *Dr. Ana Carolina Esteves Dias, Postdoctoral Fellow, School of the Environment, University of Waterloo*
- *Dr. Dana Thomson, Adjunct Professor, Environmental Sustainability Research Centre, Brock University*
- *Kassie Burns and Sydney McIntyre, Undergraduate Students, Brock University*
- *Cameron Carroll and Natasha Winckler, Undergraduate Students, University of Waterloo*

This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampusOntario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit: <https://vls.ecampusontario.ca>.

This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 license except where otherwise noted. This license allows for reuse, adaptation, remixing, and redistribution of content, so long as you attribute it to the original authors, indicate if changes are made, and link to the original, free content, found here:

Module 1: [Introduction to Community Engagement](#)

Module 2: [Information Gathering and Sharing](#)

Module 3: [Collaboration](#)

Module 4: [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)

Module 5: [Creating Connections for the Future](#)

# THE TEACHING TEAM

---

## Derek Armitage



Dr. Derek Armitage is Professor and Associate Director in the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University Waterloo. His research aims to support coastal communities and their partners to sustainably manage oceans, coasts and fisheries using ideas from cooperative (co-) management, adaptive governance and knowledge co-production. He has led a wide range of initiatives and working groups in several major research partnerships, including the Community Conservation Research Network, the OceanCanada Partnership, and most recently, a new global partnership on the vulnerability and viability of small-scale fisheries. He also serves on the Independent Science Panel for the Government of New Zealand's Sustainable Seas Science Challenge. He is the co-editor of several books, including 'Adaptive Co-Management: Collaboration, Learning and Multi-

Level Governance' (UBC Press) and a forthcoming volume, 'Canada's Oceans: Pathways to Sustainability in a Sea of Change' (UBC Press).

## Jodi Johnston



Jodi Johnston is a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, Ontario. Over the past 15 years she has traveled and made her home in many towns and small First Nation and Inuit communities across Canada. Jodi has worked extensively as an outdoor education teacher and spent large portions of every season guiding, paddling and snowshoeing in Temagami. Jodi Johnston is an honours specialist in Outdoor and Experiential Education from Queen's University and holds an honours Bachelor of Recreation and Leisure Studies from Brock University. She has spent the past 12 years working in education in student success programs, outdoor experiential education and alternative education with Indigenous students across Ontario, Labrador and Nunavut. Jodi is currently the Ojibwe language Teacher and Regional Consultant for First Nation,

Métis and Inuit Education (FNMI) at York Region District School Board. She is the Indigenous advisor for the outdoor ed committee, has her Master Educators Leave No Trace certificate and instructors, ORCKA Instructor Level 2, Wilderness First Responder, and is an Outdoor Council of Canada paddling, winter camping and hiking certifier & instructor.

### **Ella-Kari Muhl**



Ella-Kari Muhl is a political ecologist and interdisciplinary sustainability practitioner. She holds an MSc. (with distinction) in Environmental and Geographical Science from the University of Cape Town (South Africa). Her research interests focus on issues of equity, the co-production of knowledge and sustainable governance of marine resources. Currently, she is contributing to the co-development of the evaluation framework for the Gwaii Hanaas Land-Sea-People Plan, and is also a collaborating researcher in a Kuu (sea otter) recovery initiative led by Parks Canada and the Council of the Haida Nation, while completing her doctoral degree in the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo. Ms. Muhl has lived

and worked across Southern Africa, Asia and Australia, and is a certified divemaster and yoga teacher. She has extensive volunteer experience, including with the Department of Parks and Wildlife (Western Australia) and Save Our Seas (South Africa) foundation which aims to help underrepresented children experience the benefits of the ocean.

### **Bridget McGlynn**



Bridget McGlynn is recent graduate of the Master of Sustainability program and a research assistant at the ESRC. Her thesis research investigated collaborative governance for flood planning in the Wolastoq / St. John River Basin through social network analysis. This research was conducted in partnership with WWF-Canada through the Partnership for Freshwater Resilience. Her research interests focus on performance and social-ecological fit of collaborative governance.

### **Ryan Plummer**



Ryan Plummer is Professor and Director of the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre (ESRC) at Brock University. He is also presently an Adjunct Professor in the Sustainability Research Centre at the University of the Sunshine Coast (Australia) and Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo (Canada). He has held the position of Senior Research Fellow at the Stockholm Resilience Centre (Sweden) and Science Director at the Canadian Rivers Institute (Canada). His multi-faceted program of research broadly concerns

stewardship, environmental governance, and social-ecological resilience. He is the author of over 100 peer reviewed articles and the author/co-editor of four books.

### **Amanda Smits**



Amanda Smits holds a Master of Education from Brock University and is the Centre Administrator for ESRC where much of her work focuses on project management of the multiple innovative community partnership the centre has formed over the past four years. She completed a Master of Education in the Administration and Leadership stream at Brock, where her research focused mainly on post-secondary sustainability policies in practice and in 2019 Amanda

completed the Certificate in Knowledge Mobilization through the University of Guelph. Amanda was recently awarded with the Faculty of Social Sciences Staff Student Experience Award and was the 2019 recipient of FOSS's Staff Award for Community Engagement.

### **Samantha Witkowski**





Samantha Witkowski is a recent graduate of the Master of Sustainability program and a Project Coordinator at the ESRC. Her thesis research focused on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategies in environmental planning and management. Within this, she investigated stakeholder perceptions of key performance indicators for M&E in two different environmental management contexts. Her research was conducted in collaboration with the Niagara Parks Commission, as part

of the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Initiative. In her current position at the ESRC she supports the activities of several innovative partnerships and projects within the centre.

# MODULE 5 INTRODUCTION

---



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=75#oembed-1>*

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

---

## Learning Objectives

After reviewing each of these lessons in this module, you will learn how to:

- Define a truly sustainable community.
- Demonstrate how to engage actors in appropriate ways to foster sustainable communities.
- Develop and support the implementation of an engagement plan with diverse communities.
- Move knowledge into action for a sustainable future.
- Deepen your understanding of why engaging actors is essential to building sustainable communities.



# LESSON 1: MAKING CONNECTIONS TO ENGAGE



Lesson 1:

Making connections to engage

# POLICIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

---

Communities operate in the context of federal and state policies that can affect local government decisions relevant to health through laws and regulations, through the allocation of resources, and by shaping political will on issues and approaches. Among the more widely recognized policies are those that fund or regulate health care delivery services. But policies in a variety of areas, ranging from education to land use and housing, the environment, and criminal justice, can be relevant to health disparities. Policies can vary significantly across geographic areas and over time in establishing priorities, providing funding, or encouraging collaboration. They can provide important opportunities or constitute barriers to promoting health equity. The policy context shapes the levers that are available to communities to address change.

It seems reasonable to assume that the better informed communities are about the implications of federal and state policy and policy changes, the greater their ability will be to respond effectively to address health disparities and help achieve change in the determinants of health. And, conversely, the more the needs of communities are considered in decision making at the federal and state levels, the more effective those policies will be. In other words, policy makers have the opportunity to lay the groundwork for community success.

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

---

As discussed throughout each module, working in a community is far from simple. Responsible community engagement begins with a consideration of ethics. Entering your project with a conscious focus on ethical considerations related to your work will help you minimize unintended negative consequences of your work. We will be discussing three considerations:

- Social identities and intersectionality
- Power and privilege
- Representation

# SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND INTERSECTIONALITY

---

Community engagement provides us with the exciting opportunities to create change with others. Because our engagement in communities requires extensive interpersonal interactions, it is important that we explore our social identities.

The term social identity originated in the 1970s and is attributed to two social psychologists, Henri Tajfel and John Turner. These scholars were interested in developing language and theories to help better explain the way people's identities, and their relations to each other, are affected by their belonging, or perceived belonging, in different social groups.

**Social identities** (first explored in Module 1) are often defined as one's group memberships shaped by individual characteristics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. While we all belong to many different groups, from sports teams to families, social identity groups refer to those that are part of large power structures in society. Because they are defined by societal structures, these group memberships shape the way we experience and interact with our social world.

## Intersectionality

Social identities, or our social group memberships, shape our perceptions, interactions, and choice. Rather than personality traits or interests that make up your identity and sense of self, social identities describe the socially constructed groups that are present in specific environments within human societies. Our social identities are deeply connected to the social issues with which we may be engaging during our experiences.

Our multiple identities are connected in ways that uniquely shape our experience. They may overlap and interact with each other in complex ways. It is especially important to be aware of the social identities that are important to you and the complex ways in which your different identities intersect, and recognize how certain social identities may carry unearned advantages or disadvantages with them (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, a young person with a disability may experience discrimination differently than an elderly person with a disability; women of colour experience discrimination in a completely different way than men of colour, or than white women.

## Implications in Community Engagement Work

Social identities inform our perceptions of ourselves, but they also inform our interactions with others. It is

important to be aware of these identities when entering a community, as it can influence the way we interact with others in social contexts. The way a community perceives your social identities can impact your engagement experience. Conversely, the way that you perceive the community will also influence your relationships, the outcome of your work, and everyone's satisfaction with the experience. Social identities can also create power dynamics, especially when working with rights holders and/or minority groups. This is why it is so important that you conduct research ahead of time to better inform how these factors might impact your work, making you better prepared to handle any situations that arise due to social identities. An important question to ask when you conduct your research is, "What is the community's historical experience with people who have my social identities?" Then ask yourself, "How do I perceive the social identities of the people in the community?" And finally, "How would they perceive my social identities? Would these perceptions change as a result of engagement and interaction?"

Take a few moments to think about your own identities.

Which social groups do you belong to?

Consider the Circle of Power presented on page 2 of [this workbook](#). Use the wheel diagram to explore areas where you have experienced advantage or disadvantage in your life.

**This is an important consideration when conducting community engagement projects. You may even consider including this as an individual activity among actors when you first start a project together.**

Remember the discussion of [Respectful Engagement](#) and the [Social Identify Wheel](#) from [Module 1 Lesson 3](#).

# POWER AND PRIVILEGE

---

**Power** provides the ability to influence people and make decisions that impact others.

**Privilege** refers to unearned access to resources (e.g., power) that individuals receive because of social groups they are perceived to be a part of.

In our social world, the personal and social identities we hold create dynamics when we engage with others. Within each social identity category, some people have greater access to power and privilege based on membership in their social group. In our community engagement experiences, we might engage with people who are similar and different from us in various ways.

The community with which you will be working has a set of power structures, and it is vital that you understand how your presence impacts that power structure.

Understanding the dynamics of power that we operate in can help us to work better with others to meet the goals of our projects or interactions.

Read through this case study by Williams and Nunn (2016) on the [dilemmas of power and privilege in community engagement work](#).



# REPRESENTATION

---



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=44#h5p-1>

# PROBLEMATIC HISTORIES OF ENGAGEMENT: THE "WHITE SAVIOUR" COMPLEX

---

The term '**white saviour**' is itself a notion of altruism that follows the contemporary desire to 'help others' based on the idea of a universal human "compassion in us for others, sometimes despite a risk and cost to the self" (Burr, 2010, p. 1). Hughey (2014, p. 7) further described the 'white savior' as "characters whose innate sense of justice drives these tales of racial cooperation, nonwhite uplift, and White redemption" that ultimately reinforce "normal and natural White paternalism."

The term is meant to draw attention to the way this approach reproduces the problematic dynamics of colonialism. It refers to when privileged, often white, individuals enter communities (both domestically or abroad) with the intention of "saving" them. It is harmful because it patronizes communities by suggesting they need outside intervention to identify and solve their problems.

While the conversation about the saviour complex often centres around privileged, white individuals going overseas, this concept also applies more broadly. The same issues can arise for outsiders with various identities going into any community that is not their own.

As Teju Cole (2012, p. 5) succinctly puts it:

"One song we hear too often is the one in which Africa serves as a backdrop for white fantasies of conquest and heroism. From the colonial project to *Out of Africa* to *The Constant Gardener*, and *Kony 2012*, Africa has provided a space onto which white egos can conveniently be projected. It is a liberated space in which the usual rules do not apply: a nobody from America or Europe can go to Africa and become a godlike savior or, at the very least, have his or her emotional needs satisfied. Many have done it under the banner of 'making a difference'."

## Real-world Example of the White Saviour Complex:

## Voluntouring

‘Voluntouring’ — is a slang word used to describe taking a short trip which combines volunteer work with tourism. However, it often focuses more on what the volunteer gains from the experience than any lasting benefit to the communities they aim to help.

Volunteers often attempt to support communities without any researched knowledge, meaningful collaboration, or consideration of what those communities need. Often, they also lack specialized experience or skills.

For example, building a house or school is an undertaking that requires specialized knowledge and skill, in order to ensure the integrity and safety of the building. Using a different example, spending just a few short weeks volunteering in an orphanage or children’s home may have more negative side effects for children who’ve already experienced plenty of grief and loss. Children who become attached to volunteers might experience further trauma and separation anxiety when those volunteers return home.

Before taking a voluntour trip, ask yourself:

- Have community members openly expressed their need?
- What kind of support have community members asked for? Does it align with this initiative?
- Do I have the skills and experience needed for the job?
- Could I use the money I’m spending more efficiently by directly donating to the organization I want to support?
- Am I taking paid work opportunities from people in the community?

How you approach your work and knowledge of a community **matters**. As discussed earlier in this course, it is critical to remember that **community members are the experts about their community and what may need to be done**. Moreover, individuals should never do anything in another community that they would not be permitted to do back in their home community.

# EXPLORING TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY FOR COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

---

## Techniques to Support Collaboration and Engagement

There are a number of methods and innovative tools that can help support collaboration and engagement efforts.

Digital technology is often used to collaborate and/or engage communities because it can:

- Connect people across geographic locations
- Reduce overall costs (traveling, meeting locations, acquiring information, etc.)
- Produce automatic records/analyses that help overcome information barriers
- Increase efficiency and productivity
- Encourage community members who would otherwise be apprehensive of engaging to ‘find their voice’

## Technology to Support Collaboration and Engagement

Technology has changed the way we collaborate and engage with communities. It has impacted the way we connect with one another, and it has also enabled the facilitation of community engagement in new ways. Now more than ever, we are relying on technology to help us collaborate when in-person gatherings cannot take place.

A few examples of technology that is often used in collaboration and engagement efforts:

- Mobile Applications
- Social Media
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

# MOBILE APPLICATIONS

---

Mobile technology is becoming a popular way to connect communities across geographic locations. They can help support collaboration by creating a dedicated space for connecting, and allow for 24/7 access for those involved in a project. For example, while citizen science as a practice has been occurring since the late 1800s, the use of technology through citizen science applications has allowed more people to be involved in projects, over a greater geographical area. People can use smartphones, tablets, and associated applications for different purposes related to community engagement and collaboration:

- Project management
- Communication
- Data collection (see [Module 4, Lesson three on citizen science](#))
- Outreach
- Education

Examples of mobile applications include collaboration apps such as Slack and MS Teams, and feedback apps such as Mentimeter.

## Example: SitePodium for Community Engagement in Construction Projects

This is an example of an app that is utilized within the construction industry to be able to engage with communities while completing construction projects. Please keep in mind, this video was produced as an advertisement for the company but it does provide a good example of ways in which technology are being used to engage with communities.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=126#oembed-1>



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

---

Social media can be a powerful tool for community engagement and collaboration.

It enables groups to:

- Spread information
- Reach a wide audience
- Provide interesting and thought-provoking visuals
- Collect more data (e.g., through sharing or advertising surveys)

Examples of social media for collaboration and engagement include Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

Utilizing social media to communicate is directly linked with your knowledge mobilization strategy that should be in place when engaging with communities. It is important to ensure that you build a social media plan that is integrated with your KMb strategy and makes sense for the work you're doing and the knowledge you are aiming to mobilize.

## Barriers and Conflicts to Social Media

Social media is not the only way to communicate with your audience and it is important to note there are barriers and conflicts that can arise when utilizing social media to engage with communities. Taking into account the ideas of power relations, white saviour complex, confidentiality and privilege when communicating via social media is critical.

Social media can also be used to highlight these false narratives. Below we highlight one account that is doing us that!

- In order to raise awareness of the white savior complex, one Instagram user created a satirical profile for Saviour Barbie, also known as “the doll that saved Africa.”
- Barbie’s posts include photographs of herself saving the children and wildlife in the country of Africa.
- These posts are intended to point out mistakes that individuals may make during community engagement work.

[Click here to take a look at the account.](#) What thoughts and questions does this page raise for you?





# GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

---

Geospatial technologies include a “number of different high-tech systems used to acquire, analyze, manage, store and/or visualize various types of location-based data” (Shellito, 2016, p. 2). These technologies are used to engage communities; they can provide important evidence-based data for decision making. Examples include Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Remote Sensing (RS).

GIS is a geospatial technology used to collect, organize, analyze and visualize data tied to a specific location. It can be used to visualize both spatial (e.g., the geographic location of a trees) and non-spatial or attribute data (e.g., tree species type). It allows many users to participate, share, and collaborate, and works best when users are participating, sharing, and collaborating. It can be a powerful tool to empower communities and influence decision-making.

A range of information products can be produced from a GIS environment, including maps and graphs showing land-use/land-cover types; population density and income distribution; the location and spread of vector-borne diseases, homeless populations, the extent of the urban tree canopy, etc.

GIS mapping can also highlight community sensitive information that may be confidential, such as the location of endangered species. GIS data may need to be protected for some projects.

## GIS Case Study from Avis et al. (2020)

This project took place in Nairobi, Kenya in 2009.

In the settlement of Kibera, a group residents mapped their community using an online mapping platform called OpenStreetMap (OSM). The aim of the project was to generate a local, up-to-date map of the community (including local amenities and resources), empowering citizens through this process.

This aim was accomplished using a variety of engagement practices, including using multiple types of information and technologies, forming local networks, building relationships across community members and settlements, etc. As a result, local amenities and resources were mapped and continue to be updated when required.

Information was subsequently shared across communities (offline and online) using the OSM platform/website, targeted outreach, and news platforms.

As the project has grown, community members have now expanded communication efforts using media resources, including online video, blogging, and reporting on the Ushahidi “Voice” platforms.

Read more about this initiative, and other similar projects related to GIS mapping in [Community Engagement in Digital Innovation: Evidence from past experience in the Global South](#).

## GIS Community Engagement Initiative

tree0code Niagara is a Geospatial community engagement initiative designed to crowdsource data about the Urban Forests of Niagara’s 12 municipalities. tree0code Niagara focuses on environmental, educational, economic, and social benefits of citizen engagement and active participation. The associated application provides an easy-to-use public inventorying platform that encourages the public to contribute to an interactive and dynamic map of the region’s tree population. All data collected is shared openly to private citizens, institutions, researchers, the Region, and Municipalities. The information collected can be used to make key decisions about our urban forests.

Read more about this initiative, it’s benefits, and view Niagara’s tree map at [this link!](#)

# IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES

---

## 1. The capacity and ability for different actors and rights holders to participate.

Does the use of technology exclude certain people from engagement activities? For example, it is important to consider whether the group or community you are engaging with has reliable access to technology and online internet services. Before you begin any community engagement work, take some time to consider:

- Remote communities
- Marginalized groups
- Rights holder groups
- Cultural considerations for using technology

## 2. The knowledge or skills to efficiently use technology

Additionally, some groups may be harder to reach, or not have the knowledge or skills to efficiently use technology (e.g., certain age demographics). Unclear communication via technology can lead to misunderstandings between those engaged in a project.

## 3. Digital safety and critical thinking is NECESSARY

Technology can be a powerful tool, but it also comes with some risks.

- It is important stay vigilant about protecting your privacy, and keeping personal information limited and professional.
- Although technology is a useful tool for spreading awareness or information, there is just as much likelihood that misinformation is posted about online as well. You should always consider the validity and credibility of information that you are viewing, using, or promoting. When looking at information from a study online you might ask yourself ‘who funded this study?’, ‘how long was the study?’, ‘who were the participants?’, and so on.

In reflecting on these considerations, you can revisit [Module 1 Lesson 3: Who is involved with community engagement?](#)

# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN ACTION: BROCK-LINCOLN LIVING LAB

---

Here we learn from Dr. Marilyne Jollineau, Shannon McKay, and Mike Kirkopolous discussing the Brock-Lincoln Living Lab.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=135#oembed-1>*

Dr. Marilyne Jollineau, Micheal Kirkopolous, and Shannon McKay are part of the Brock-Lincoln Living Lab, a unique partnership between Brock University's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre and The Town of Lincoln, both of which are located in Ontario, Canada. These individuals bring different perspectives to the topics discussed in this video, covering a wide array of experiential knowledge bases. They discuss the importance of community engagement in building sustainable communities using tangible examples from The Town of Lincoln, and how community partnerships can streamline communities toward sustainability. Their hope is that more innovative partnerships will soon be a community norm.

## Key Takeaways from the Panel Discussion

- A sustainable community is a balanced interface between the economic, social, and environmental needs of a community (7:35).
- Engaging and connecting to all the voices in a community assists with creating innovative solutions to complex issues (12:18).
- Engagement between different entities (stakeholders, organizations, municipal government, etc.) can create opportunities for sharing and redistributing resources to ensure efficient use of resources (17:00).

- It is important to create engagement strategies that are specific to the individuals that you are wanting to interact with; The Town of Lincoln used innovative engagement strategies to ensure individuals of all ages were involved with community services projects (22:00).
- Transdisciplinary engagement in communities can lead to more pertinent academic research that is topical and useful to communities and supports building sustainable communities (27:10).

# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN ACTION: THE GLOBAL TRANSITION MOVEMENT

---

Transition is a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world. Since 2006, community-led Transition groups have been working towards a low-carbon, socially just future with resilient communities, more active participation in society, and caring culture focused on supporting each other.

[Characteristics](#) of the Transition Movement:

- Focused on the [Transition Principles](#)
- Uses participatory approaches
- Collaborating with municipalities
- Rooted in the reality of community members
- Informed, evidence-based decision making

Transition Town: What's it all about?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=185#oembed-1>*

Learn more about the movement at these links:

[Transition movement website](#)

[Transition movement short documentary](#)





# LESSON 2: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS



Lesson 2:  
Future Considerations

# HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

---

It is critical to highlight the community engagement work that is currently taking place between higher education institutions (HEIs) and communities. HEIs are emphasizing the need to strengthen community relationships, and this is often referred to as the “third mission” of HEIs. This is often reflected through formal partnerships or other engagement activities with community members, organizations, etc.

HEI-community partnerships for sustainability specifically coincide with HEIs’ expanded mission to address real-world societal challenges. These types of engaging partnerships aim to:

- Use multiple ways of thinking and knowledge to generate unique solutions to complex problems
- Develop relevant solutions for the local community
- Provide an informed evidence-base from which to make critical decisions
- Build the capacity of local community members
- Inform both research and practice

## HEI-Community Engagement Work in Action

The Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University currently has 7 formalized partnerships, each with their own purpose and collaborative team.

- [Brock-Lincoln Living Lab](#)
- [The Prudhommes Project](#)
- [Trails, Assets, and Tourism Initiative](#)
- World Wildlife Fund
  - [Partnership for Freshwater Resilience](#)
  - [Living Planet at Campus](#)
- [Brock University Project Charter](#)
- [Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Initiative \(EESI\)](#)
- [Government of the Northwest Territories \(GNWT\)](#)
- [Niagara Adapts](#) (currently wrapping up)

[Click here](#) to learn more about HEI-community engagement from Brock University Environmental Sustainability Research Centre's Innovative partnerships!

# WHERE TO GO NEXT?

---

Now that we are nearing the end of the course, we need to start thinking about how you are going to apply what you have learned. These lessons and topics are transferable to many aspects of your academic, social, and professional development. For example:

- In your current undergraduate courses
- Possible thesis (graduate) thesis
- Influencing future career choices
- Continuing education (post-secondary diplomas, professional development, etc.)

## In Current Courses

Often times undergraduate courses include experiential education components. This is especially true at Brock University, where over 1,000 courses have experiential education components.

- To learn more about Experiential Education at Brock Visit: [Experiential Education at Brock](#)
- [Case Studies: A Step Towards Solving the Climate Crisis](#)

Taking courses that provide you with a different perspective is also important. This could include expanding your understanding of Indigenous history within Canada in order to ensure that you are able to cultivate a good relationship with Indigenous colleagues and communities you may eventually work with.

## Thesis Research

Community engagement and outreach can be one component or a large focus of thesis work, and can be relevant in all fields of study.

It can be your focus topic. For example:

- Exploring perceptions, attitudes, values, etc., of community members
- Tools or frameworks to increase community engagement
- Effects of community engagement in a program or initiative

Alternatively, it can be part of your methodology. Getting people involved can help information and results to

reach a wider audience.

## A Community Engagement Focus in Student Research

DeCock-Caspell, M., & Vasseur, L. (2021). [Visualizations as a tool to increase community engagement in climate change adaptation decision-making](#). FACETS, 6: 240-251.

McGlynn, B. (2020). Student Research Highlight: Participation in Trail Monitoring & Evaluation [blog post]. Available at: <https://brocku.ca/esrc/2020/03/18/student-research-highlight-participation-in-trail-monitoring-evaluation/>

Kapeller, B. (2021). Exploring Environmental Stewardship in the Niagara Region [online resource]. Available at: [https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7d796bbda08940faa287c925ba5a90b2?fbclid=IwAR1L48o2pLoGXtJaR4cQ\\_yb9MEeQlwtk8uvM6LZVsx5cG3jgzt5cnvk8DfM](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7d796bbda08940faa287c925ba5a90b2?fbclid=IwAR1L48o2pLoGXtJaR4cQ_yb9MEeQlwtk8uvM6LZVsx5cG3jgzt5cnvk8DfM)

# FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

---

## Career and Job Opportunities

- Community engagement coordinator, advisor, or assistant
- Non-profit organization worker
- Community researcher
- Digital community engagement and communication specialist
- Knowledge mobilization and/or science communication specialist

## Continuing Education Programs

- There are numerous post-secondary degree options available on this subject.
- Many post-graduate programs focus on leadership in community engagement, social justice and social change, and more.
- You may also notice that many sustainability or environmental-focused programs place a large emphasis on community engagement.
- More recently, programs are implementing/exploring experiential education opportunities, and highlighting community engagement techniques that can take place in a virtual world.



# MODULE 5 REFLECTION AND ASSESSMENT



## Module 5 Reflection and Assessment

# MODULE 5 LEARNING CHECK

---

## Learning Check

After reviewing each of the lessons in this module, you should now be able to:

- Define a truly sustainable community
- Demonstrate how to engage actors in appropriate ways to foster sustainable communities
- Develop and support the implementation of an engagement plan with diverse communities
- Move knowledge into action for a sustainable future
- Deepen your understanding of why engaging actors is essential to building sustainable communities

# MODULE 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

---

## Key Takeaways

- Each component of community engagement work is essential and interconnected.
- There are numerous ethical considerations that practitioners must acknowledge throughout all community engagement projects.
- Technology can be a supportive asset, if appropriate for the community.
- There are multiple avenues to utilize the knowledge gained from this course to create more sustainable communities.

# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

---

## The urgency of intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=92#oembed-1>

Read Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) [Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics](#)

## Decolonizing Methodologies for Sustainability Research



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=92#oembed-2>

This is the first of three workshops organized by University of Waterloo students on decolonization, identity and intersectionality at the university and in research process. The session is moderated by Lowine Hill and Dr. Ranjan Datta, Canada Research Chair- II in Community Disaster

Research at Indigenous Studies, Mount Royal University, Calgary presents “Decolonizing the Meanings of Research: A lifelong process of learning, unlearning and relearning responsibilities”.

Sessions 2 and 3 are included below.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=92#oembed-3>*



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=92#oembed-4>*

## Panel Discussion on Innovative Partnerships and Sustainability



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=92#oembed-5>*

This discussion highlights innovative partnerships that aim to co-create solutions for urgent sustainability challenges. These partnerships are a core component of sustainability science and the work of the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre. This seminar will highlight the mutual benefits that can be realized for people and planet when Brock teams up with the community.

Featuring: Dr. Ryan Plummer (panelist), Amanda Smits (panelist), Samantha Witkowski (panelist), and Dr. Jessica Blythe (moderator).

## Supplementary Reading

Read Chicago Beyond's [Why Am I Always Being Researched?](#) A guidebook for community organizations, researchers, and funders to help us get from insufficient understanding to more authentic truth

### **Academic journal articles:**

David-Chavez, D. M., & Gavin, M. C. (2018). [A global assessment of Indigenous community engagement in climate research](#). *Environmental Research Letters*, 13(12), 123005.

Szetey, K., Moallemi, E., Ashton, E., Butcher, M., Sprunt, B., & Bryan, B. (2021). [Participatory planning for local sustainability guided by the Sustainable Development Goals](#). *Ecology and Society*, 26(3).



# MODULE 5 ASSESSMENT

---



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=94#h5p-3>

# MODULE 5 ASSIGNMENT

---



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bscmodule5/?p=97#h5p-2>

# REFERENCES

---

Avis, W., Wodajo, B., & Getaneh, B. (2020). Community Engagement in Digital Innovation: Evidence from past experience in the Global South. Available at: [asap.uk.com/daq-east-africa](http://asap.uk.com/daq-east-africa)

Burr, J. (2010). The altruistic self and the desire of developing others: Towards a post-development ethos of action. M.A. dissertation, Dalhousie University. Available at: [https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item?id=MR63609&op=pdf&app=Library&is\\_thesis=1&oclc\\_number=795623888](https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item?id=MR63609&op=pdf&app=Library&is_thesis=1&oclc_number=795623888)

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *u. Chi. Legal f.*, 139.

Cole, T. (2012). The White-Savior Industrial Complex. *The Atlantic*. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

Hughey, M. (2014). *The White Savior film: Content, critics, and consumption*. Temple University Press.

Shellito, B.A. (2016). *Introduction to Geospatial Technologies*. Third Edition. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.