



**This is My Niagara is a proactive initiative set in place to inspire a movement towards connecting young talent with small and medium sized businesses in Niagara.**

**FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

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**THIS IS MY NIAGARA IS A PROACTIVE INITIATIVE SET IN PLACE TO INSPIRE A MOVEMENT TOWARDS CONNECTING YOUNG TALENT WITH SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED BUSINESSES IN NIAGARA.**

**AT ITS ROOT, THIS IS MY NIAGARA IS BUILDING GREATER NIAGARA AWARENESS AT THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL THROUGH A COORDINATED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM, INTERACTIVE DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORM AND STAKEHOLDER EVENTS.**

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# WORKFORCE RETENTION STRATEGY

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

Niagara is experiencing an employment dispute. Local perspectives match with the attitudes of outsiders when it comes to understanding the employment issues ailing Niagara. Old mind sets coupled with poor communication have only intensified the situation.

### A few statements have been made clear:

- Niagara has no job opportunities
- Niagara lacks suitable job opportunities
- Niagara lacks suitable/equivalent spousal jobs
- Niagara SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) lack proper awareness about the benefits of Co-Op and therefore participate sparingly to engage local youth/talent
- Niagara is aging and youth are leaving

A few key points and statements have been extracted from publications by the Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Community Observatory and Brock University, which support the reasoning behind this strategy...

### Facts & Figures:

- There is now a greater diversity in Niagara's economic structure as we shift to an economy driven by small and medium sized enterprises
- From 2003 to 2008 Niagara experienced an increase of almost 900 businesses with five to nine employees
- From 2009 to 2011 685 businesses were created, bringing the tally of business in Niagara to 24,727.
- Niagara has 4 emerging clusters: Bio-Products, Digital Media, Green Products, Health & Wellness
- Both Brock University and Niagara College are shifting programs in order to provide students with in-demand skill sets
- 70% of students attending post secondary education in Niagara are from outside the region.
- 58% of students attending highschool would not choose to come to Brock University because of its location (perception).
- 49% of students who were accepted to Brock declined because of location (feedback from friends).

- Young people see the Niagara area as moving toward an economy that caters to seniors and tourists ... they lament the lack of diversity in jobs available
- [Niagara] has everything, except jobs

### Calls to Action:

- The opportunity before us is to ensure that we are positioning the region to attract and retain this educated workforce to meet these emerging needs
- The shift is towards lower paying jobs
- **Niagara's youth population 20 to 39 (especially 20 to 24) is well below the level of other comparable regions**
- Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, but the right mix of jobs
- **It is important for leaders to focus on the positives without ignoring the presence of certain problems**
- The Niagara area is a great place to live. Everyone seems to agree on that. However there is a justified concern about where the leaders of tomorrow will come from, if all the best and brightest move elsewhere.
- Create a highly skilled, educated workforce that can effectively transition across industries and occupations.



## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the Niagara Region in partnership with the NEDC developed a strategy to transition the region through the next five years. Simultaneously, the Niagara Original brand was launched as a place brand for Niagara, and has since received local recognition.

NEDC commissioned a Workforce Attraction Strategy which laid the ground for “This is My Niagara”. The new economic development model will now provide the vehicle for change. The new model recognizes the importance of small and medium sized businesses and regional objectives align clearly with retaining youth.

During the initial phases of this initiative, several key stakeholders were identified who were embarking on similar initiatives (in many cases the initiatives were pure duplication). We took this as a sign that Niagara as a whole was transitioning towards a varied understanding and approach to economic development, and that what was needed was a lead partner, or catalyst, who could provide leadership in the movement through collaboration of efforts. Immediately we began meeting with these identified stakeholders to create a synergy. To date, we have managed to establish numerous working partnerships with leaders in Niagara, who are supportive of the purpose of the initiative. “To develop a complete, actionable marketing and implementation strategy that will attract knowledge workers and entrepreneurs to locate in Niagara, Canada”

“This is My Niagara” incorporates the best practices of other places such as Pittsburg, Detroit, Calgary and Waterloo, extracting key lessons and applying them specifically to our environment.

“This is My Niagara” provides positive movement to the actions outlined in: Niagara’s Economic Growth Strategy, Niagara Culture Plan, Niagara Labour Market Plan Update 2011, Niagara Community Observatory, and Niagara Immigrant Employment Council. The initiative provides a platform for collaborative action, something that has been missing in Niagara. It has already brought together: Brock University, Niagara College, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Careers Niagara, Next Niagara, St. Catharines Economic Development, St. Catharines Enterprise

Centre, Niagara Falls Enterprise Centre, Integrated Community Planning and nGen in addition to several small businesses. The initiative provides a comfortable platform for people to engage and communicates to locals and the world exactly who is here, what is here and what is going on here in Niagara.

The content in this book is not intended to be comprehensive or complete, but rather serves as a starting point to move this important work forward, while continuing the conversation of what else can be done to increase the success of retaining and attracting young talent and entrepreneurs to Niagara.



Partnerships will continue to be established and nurtured as we take this marketing initiative forward. Our number one concern is taking action to instill change in Niagara. Though research is an important and crucial building block, Niagara is already strengthened by a wealth of research and action items. Our role here is to use the research strategically as part of the overall branding and marketing of Niagara for the young people.

### 3.0 A STRATEGIC APPROACH THAT FOSTERS INTEGRATION, ALIGNMENT, COLLABORATION & ACTION

This initiative is focused on fostering a powerful and persuasive common voice so that we may effectively and efficiently ignite a dialogue that speaks about Niagara's reality. It is about providing a layered platform that encourages people to share their stories and experiences with one another (at a community, municipal and regional level), where people feel comfortable searching out the truth about Niagara and what we have to offer here. Developing a strong collective voice is the best method we have for marketing Niagara because it allows us to take a unified approach that spans the entire region. Everyone involved becomes a brand ambassador and in turn feels a stronger connection to Niagara.

Through this initiative we take on several action items simultaneously. We market the Niagara brand, which helps us situate the initiative. We present a collective voice, which appeals to a talent pool, which in turn attracts employers to the area. This creates a competitive business environment, which strengthens Niagara's brand value and collective voice. This is a fully functioning process that continues to strengthen as each improvement is made.

**Niagara's Economic Growth Strategy 2009 - 2012** provided the initial framework upon which this initiative took shape. This is my Niagara aligns directly to the following Strategic Action Plans:

- Build a stronger collective voice
- Create a competitive business environment
- Target strategic employers
- Marketing the Niagara Brand
- Improve transportation and related infrastructure
- Develop Niagara's Talent Pool

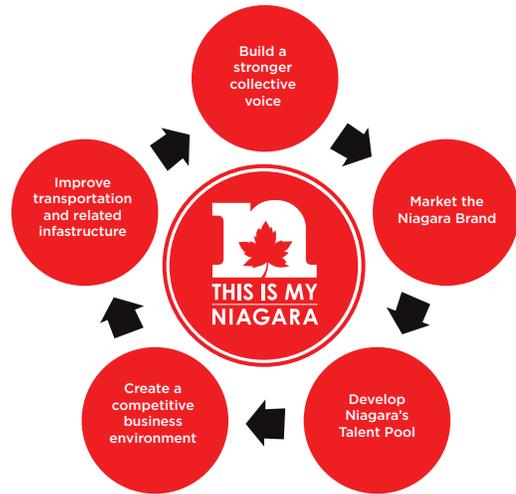
#### How?

At its most basic level, we should see This is My Niagara supporting Niagara's Economic Growth Strategy as follows:

- We provide a platform for locals, experts and recruits to share their Niagara stories and experiences.
- This in turn complements the Niagara brand, which is being used to situate the strategy and campaign. The collective dialogue helps to 'author our unique story to tell the world'.
- These stories and experiences coupled with our mar-

keting materials speak to an emerging talent pool and intrigue them to consider Niagara for themselves. As a result we increase Niagara's talent pool.

- This increased talent pool draws the attention of entrepreneurs and new employers who now consider Niagara as a place to (re)locate. Their settlement in Niagara increases the competitive business environment.



- This increased talent pool and business landscape supports the business case for improving transportation and related infrastructure.
- A stronger collective voice is fostered having worked through each stage of the initiative thus far and continues to grow as we move back through the process.

At each stage of this process, we learn about the environment and adjust the strategy accordingly. This layered approach provides the opportunity to perform checks and balances along the way and (re)evaluate the situation at hand. It also keeps us accountable to the current environment.

Change will not happen over night. There are several layers to the strategy that needs to be approached separately. Though this initiative allows us to touch on each element simultaneously, care will need to be taken to ensure each component is granted the appropriate attention. This approach will only strengthen the outcome of the strategy. By tackling each layer, we build the necessary supports to ensure the success of Niagara's economic growth through the retention of young talent.

## 4.0 WHY IS THE STRATEGY NEEDED NOW?

At the heart of economic development is a strong youth retention strategy. In today's creative economy, fueled by knowledge workers and entrepreneurs, a proper youth retention strategy is key. It is also common sense.

This initiative brings the mandates and actions of numerous partners together to achieve solidarity and measurable progressive action. This is My Niagara has advanced these mandates into a neatly aligned strategy that has resulted in strong collaboration and early success.

How can one expect to succeed in economic development, if the people, who lie at the core of any economy are not the end target? This initiative takes a modern approach to economic development by targeting those individuals who will thrive in the Niagara Region, now and in the future. This is My Niagara exists to create and nurture an affinity to Niagara among young people.

The strategy is structured around the concept of: *quality of place*. The recent advancements in technology and mega shift towards a more creative economy mean businesses and individuals are not tied to a particular location. They are now free to select a site that best suits their quality of life demands. **In Niagara, we are distracted by the quality of our place, yet young people see location as a detractor;** 58% of students who did not apply and 49% of students who rejected their offer admission to Brock University, did so because of

the location and the perceptions built based around feedback from friends. These are perceptions This is My Niagara aims to change.

Economic development is not built on large scale manufacturing anymore, rather it is derived from supporting small and medium sized businesses who innovate and expand incrementally. It is also not built on the back of tourism. **Young talent perceives the job market in Niagara as directly tied to seasonal, minimum wage jobs associated with tourism.** This is another perception This is My Niagara needs to adjust.

Through research and conversation, it becomes very clear that what Niagara needs is a to build greater Niagara awareness at the educational level. This initiative is doing so through a coordinated Internship program, interactive digital media platform and stakeholder events.



According to a recent study *Making the Case for Place*, presented at the annual conference for the International Economic Development Council, "locally grown entrepreneurs create wealth that sticks and tend to support the community, reinvest in their business, support other local businesses and support local philanthropies". This is why we recognize the importance of creating and sustaining a local talent pool situated in Niagara.

**“We are shifting focus towards small and medium sized businesses, which dominate the Niagara region and will continue to gain recognition as the present and future of our creative economy.”**

At its heart, this strategy is about developing a collective voice to tell our Niagara story. It is about connecting to current and potential residents and business community through emotion and sense of belonging. It is about uncovering beliefs, perceptions and attitudes and working to rid our region of its negative stigma while celebrating our unique assets. It is also about preventing the duplication of efforts, aligning strategies and acting together for Niagara.

## 5.0 BEST PRACTICES: IT'S WORKING ELSEWHERE

This is My Niagara integrated the most successful attributes of several best practices and packaged them into a unique initiative and a first for Niagara. The scope and long-term layered approach of this project allow us to correctly draw on quality of place, people and higher education simultaneously to bridge gaps and construct a support structure to underpin the region as a viable option for life and business. At the same time, it allows for the development of a sense of pride and belonging so that our entire community (approximately 160 communities and all 12 municipalities) can become ambassadors that support the case that Niagara is a viable candidate for young people.

**DETROIT** | An example quite similar to Pittsburgh in which a primarily manufacturing based city becomes transformed into a creative hub for the new economy. The attention to culture and quality of place has helped lead Detroit towards a successful turnaround and best practice. Detroit is working tirelessly to create a collective voice that speaks strongly and proudly about their city so that others may discover the truth about life in Detroit. [www.believeindetroit.org](http://www.believeindetroit.org) | [detroitworksproject.com](http://detroitworksproject.com)

**PITTSBURGH** | One of Richard Florida's most pointed examples. The case of Pittsburgh's transformation can be seen in direct relation to that of the Niagara example... both were once thriving manufacturing hubs and have now been forced to shift focus towards the more creative age. Pittsburgh has set a stunning example of the ways in which emerging clusters and attention to quality of place can turn an ordinary economic development initiative into a highly regarded and enormously successful place branding and workforce attraction movement. [www.pittsburghcityliving.com](http://www.pittsburghcityliving.com)

**CALGARY** | An example of how quality of life coupled with an ongoing narrative can impact ones decision to remain or relocate. Economic Development and Workforce Attraction are integrated for the purposes of showing Calgary to those who wouldn't otherwise have the means of discovering the opportunities that exist. Calgary provides evidence that taking this interpretive

and interpersonal approach to economic development proves valuable and achieves overwhelming success. [www.liveincalgary.com](http://www.liveincalgary.com)



**WATERLOO** | A rich example of the benefits gained for an intricate partnership developed between higher education and the local business community. We look to Waterloo and the seamless integration they have fostered, promoted and nurtured between the University of Waterloo and innovative businesses such as RIM. We look to their business and education partnership that is leading this movement. [www.bus-edpartnership.org/main.cfm](http://www.bus-edpartnership.org/main.cfm)

The website Edmonton Stories also demonstrates the gains derived from engaging in a dialogue to script a community narrative. [www.edmontonstories.ca](http://www.edmontonstories.ca)

### Linkages & Application

What is clearly evident when analyzing each case is their attention to they're people. Those who live there are called upon to help expose the place for its preferred amenities and unique attributes. Each of the four best practices market their place through a narrative, a dialogue, a conversation. If you notice, the most compelling arguments are so because they are authentic and expressed through the people themselves.



## **PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION BROCK UNIVERSITY**

At the onset of this initiative, This is My Niagara engaged University Office of Marketing Communications at Brock and helped situate the University in Niagara through the incorporation of the Niagara Original brand on all new marketing materials.

The next step was to engage the Co-op Department to uncover barriers and limitations to connecting young talent with the local business community. These conversations highlighted areas for growth, especially in our emerging industries.

We then partnered with a newly established program: Project SEED, in which students are given the opportunity to see their entrepreneurial vision supported and implemented. We were the title sponsor for the January 17th Pairing Breakfast in which students, mentors, alumni and community members were introduced for the first time at the launch of the program.

We also initiated an inaugural Group Internship program with the Department of Communication, Popular Culture and Film (CPCF), where 13 students have been placed in a group internship with This is My Niagara, where they have gained autonomy to absorb professional firsthand experience. At the same time, we are moulding the perceptions of these young minds and introducing them to the realities of the Niagara region, and changing their attitudes for the better. This cycle is already proving successful, as their communication about Niagara is transformed from skeptical negativism to inspiring positivity. (See testimonials - Appendix B)

This is My Niagara also partnered with Career Services to facilitate the partnership between our two parties, NEXTNiagara, St. Catharines Enterprise Centre and Niagara Falls Enterprise Centre to originate an inaugural networking event for young professionals: Connect &

Conquer Niagara. This event is not only showcasing the unique talent hidden within Niagara, it is also presenting a multidimensional partnership formed by five mutually exclusive organizations for the betterment of Niagara. This partnership and event is used to highlight the kinds of possibilities available right now in Niagara.

Most notable, at the moment of transition when NEDC was set to dismantle, The CPCF Department with the support of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Brock agreed to house This is My Niagara effective April 1, 2012, while also guaranteeing to support the initiative and provide both a workspace and annual human resources. The move to Brock means that This is My Niagara engages a new set of talent annually to ensure the issues raised are current and the approaches designed to offer solutions are fresh.

## OUR ROLE

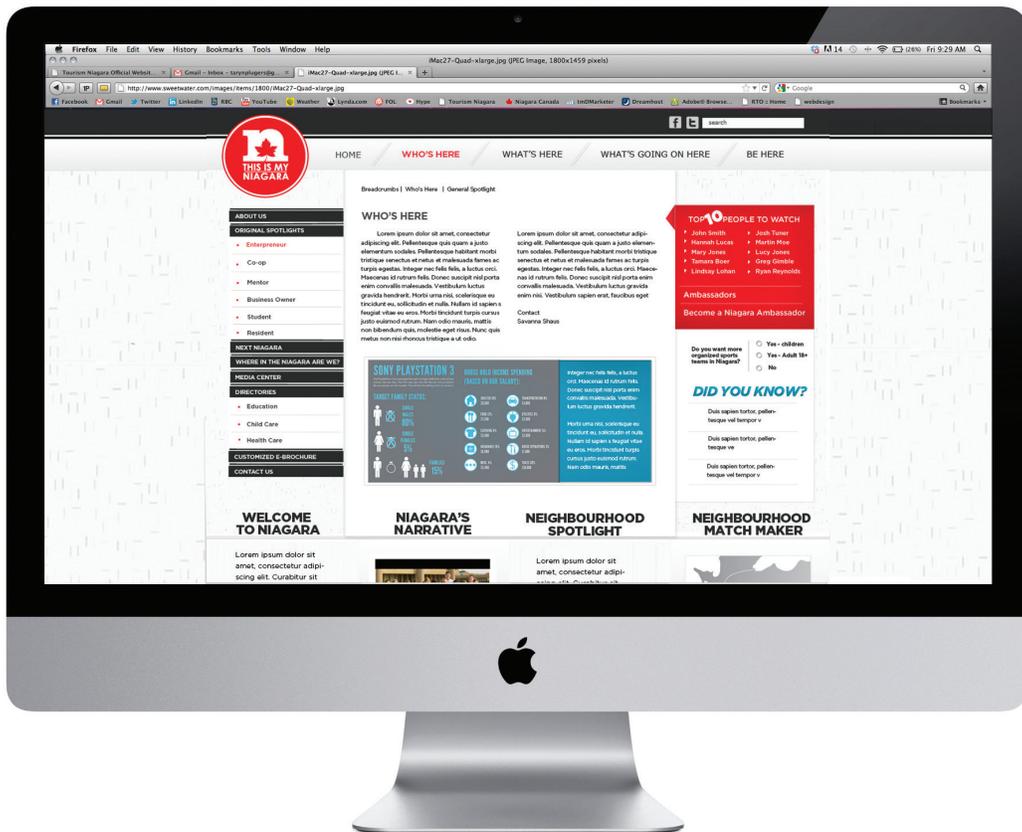
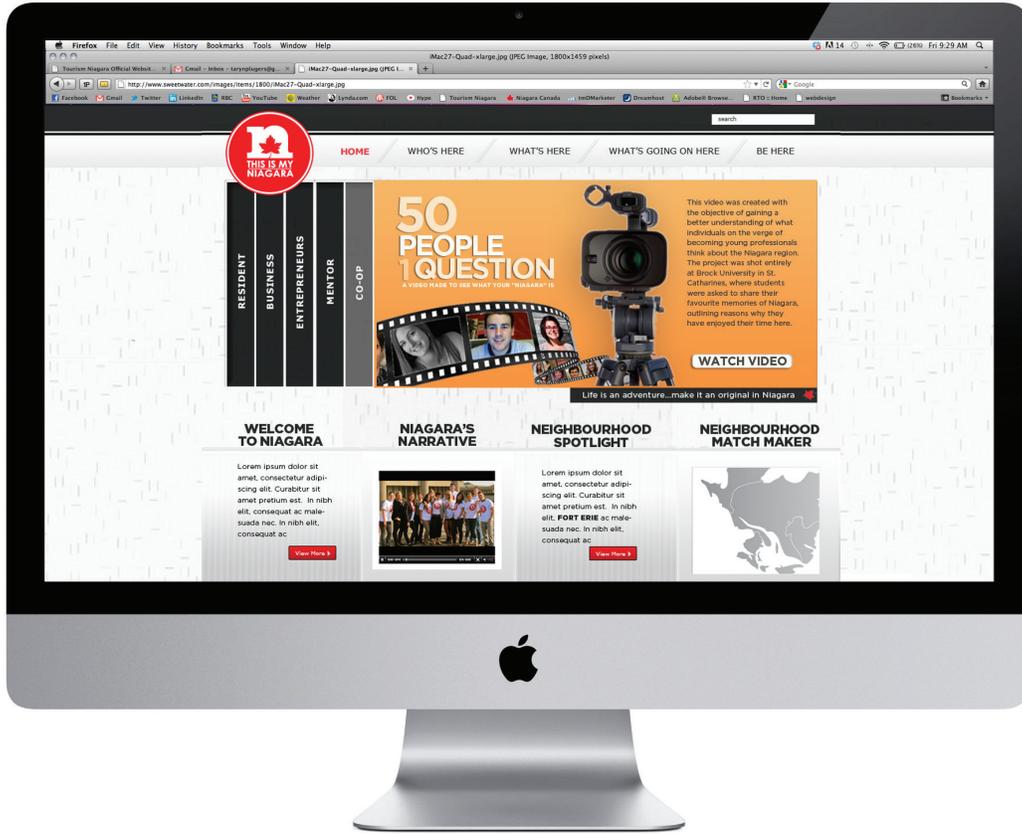
We act as a community catalyst to pull together all of the various strategy pieces. We have positioned ourselves in this role based on our in-house capabilities, our willingness to take risks and our ability to listen to the voices within Niagara and work collaboratively to bring success to the greater whole. We bring key stakeholders together to reduce the duplication of efforts and strengthen the support network for all partners' mandates and actions going forward. We identify key stakeholder actions that align seamlessly with our efforts, and provide the implementation and marketing support necessary to see their actions through.

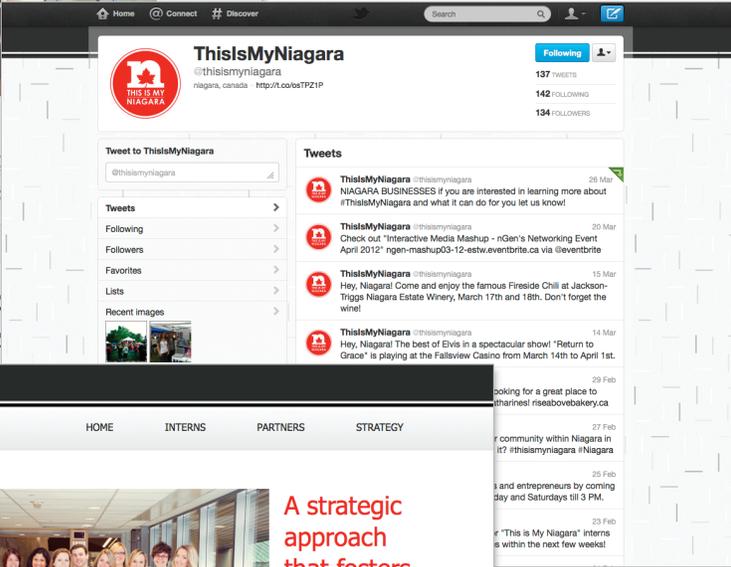
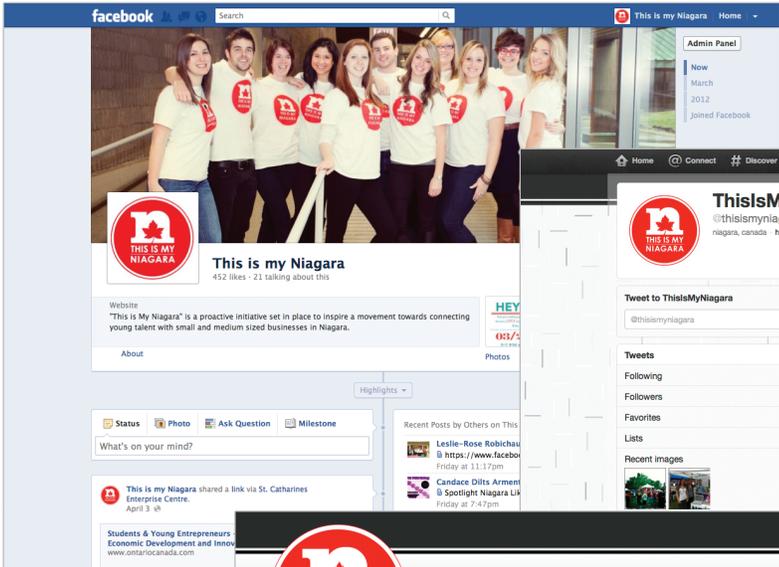
At its most basic level, this strategy and campaign have integrated the Niagara Original place brand directly into its most overt marker: the logo. We've done so with the foresight to fit this project seamlessly into the overall branding and marketing of Niagara. A youth retention and attraction strategy is deeply rooted in place, because attracting talent, today, comes down to where the talent wants to live. In order to ground this campaign, we are going into the community to extract the faces of our campaign. We are not using actors or stock images, we are calling on members of the Niagara community who have succeeded here to show off the region.

Talent retention and the appropriate marketing of quality of place lie at the heart of economic development in today's creative economy. We are not the first Region to shift focus to a strategy such as this, and it is in our best interest not to be the last. We are asking our population to join forces and speak with one collective voice about the quality of Niagara. This is My Niagara wants to uproot the negative perception, learn about the opportunities for improvement and speak positively about the region. This is My Niagara understands that things are not perfect, but we also need to understand that there is a lot of good worth monitoring and mentioning. We need to understand all the parts so that we can make an educated judgement about educating the whole. Today, talent and place are economic development.

# 7.0 OVERVIEW OF MARKETING MATERIALS

Note - All text is filler text used to help understand the overall look and feel of the website.







HOME    INTERNS    PARTNERS    STRATEGY



### A strategic approach that fosters integration, alignment, collaboration & action

Support us by liking our Facebook page!

This is My Niagara is a proactive initiative set in place to inspire a movement towards connecting young talent with small and medium sized businesses in Niagara. At its root, This is My Niagara is building greater Niagara awareness at the educational level through a coordinated Internship program, interactive digital media platform and stakeholder events.

This strategy and accompanying marketing campaign are focused on fostering a powerful and persuasive common voice so that we may effectively and efficiently ignite a dialogue that speaks about Niagara's reality. It is about providing a platform that encourages people to share their stories and experiences with one another, where people feel comfortable searching out the truth about Niagara and what we have to offer here. Developing a strong collective voice is the best method we have for marketing Niagara because it allows us to take a unified approach that spans the entire region. Everyone involved becomes a brand ambassador and in turn feels a stronger



**THIS IS MY NIAGARA**

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To whom it may concern,

The Niagara Economic Development Corporation (NEDC) is developing a new Workforce Attraction Strategy. The campaign behind this strategy is called "this is my niagara".

This campaign will focus on showing life in Niagara for what it really is. This means contacting local residents, business owners, workers, students, etc. to share their stories and experiences.

We hope that you will tell your story so that others may begin to see what Niagara may have to offer them. Having the people who live and/or work here share their experience first hand is the most authentic method we have to tell this story properly.

With your permission, a small team of project assistants from NEDC will meet with you to discuss and capture your story. We will create a video narrative so that your story can be told in your own words.

These videos will then be showcased on our Facebook page and our upcoming website. The Niagara stories will be used to attract new recruits to Niagara, reinforce all of the positive attributes of living in Niagara and highlight the many business success stories.

We have many challenges ahead of us but we firmly believe in this place that we call "home" and the opportunities and quality of life available here. By working together we can tell the world what makes this place so original.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Savanna Schaus using the contact information listed below.

Thank you,

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Connect & Conquer Niagara is an event for young professionals, entrepreneurs, business owners and the brightest students who want to get engaged in the community.

Every four months this event is held at a local venue. In 2012/2013 This is My Niagara along with its partners will transition to sector based events. Inviting students and businesses from specific emerging clusters, this allows networking to be established, and also gives a chance for a local business to share their expertise.

For sectors with already established networking sessions we will promote the opportunity rather than recreate the wheel.

## 8.0 NEXT STEPS



- The Faculty of Social Sciences at Brock University has provided the bridge funding necessary to transition This is My Niagara to Phase Two (Regional / University / College TBD Partnership)
- Summer Intern opportunities are now available
- One outstanding Intern to be hired part-time for one month (\$500 bonus)
- Charitable donations account to be set-up at Brock University
- Niagara College partnership to be pursued (Reaching out to Dan Patterson upon his return from sabbatical)
- Agreement and contracts signed (goal: June 1, 2012)
- Implement five year plan
- Approach local businesses for support, awareness and participation
- Launch “Where In The Niagara Are We?” Contest
- Build and launch [www.thisismyniagara.com](http://www.thisismyniagara.com)



# APPENDIX A

## NIAGARA WORKFORCE PLANNING BOARD

[David Alexander]

### Mandate

- Research the conditions of the local labour market;
- Facilitate community consultations to review/discuss research findings
- Establish local priorities for labour market development;
- Engage local partners in initiating action plans that respond to priorities of mutual interest.
- Benchmarking Niagara against five similar regions
- Case Studies in Best Practices in Key Job Growth
- Focus on emerging industries and clusters
- Agriculture and rural related industries
- Small and Medium Sized Enterprise Supports
- Literacy and the Workforce

## NEXT NIAGARA [Vanessa Bilenduke]

### Mandate

The Next Generation Advisory Panel exists to develop, promote and recommend strategies to retain Niagara's young, emerging labour force.

Next Niagara is an initiative funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and delivered by the Niagara Workforce Planning Board and implemented by a group of committed 15-35 year old Niagara residents interested in creating opportunities and developing a stronger community for Niagara's next generation. We are committed to seeing Niagara grow as a vibrant and diverse community where Niagara's next generation (ages 15-35) can live, work and stay

### Actions (2011-2012)

- June/July 2011 Youth Survey (1000 response)
- October 21, 2011 My Future Niagara Summit
- Training opportunities
- Workshop for employers speaking to the Generation Gap.
- Toastmasters

## NIAGARA REGION INTEGRATED COMMUNITY PLANNING

[Terry Donia & Marian Bannerman]

### Mandate

Developing and actively implementing the strategies contained in the Culture Plan.

### Actions

- Culture Plan
- Creative economy: build a diverse economy by strengthening cultural resources and the creative cultural sector to maximize their contribution to economic development
- Creative places: encourage analysis and inclusion of cultural places, spaces and activities in land-use planning, infrastructure development and programming to preserve and develop distinct and unique places here.
- Creative people: support professional development and information sharing for the creative cultural sector and encourage participation in culture across the Niagara community to stimulate innovation, creativity and community engagement
- Creative identity: promote awareness, understanding and appreciation of culture and its contribution to the ongoing development of vibrant, unique communities and a shared sense of identity as Niagara
- Website: [cultureniagara.ca](http://cultureniagara.ca)  
[for tourists and residents alike]

### My Niagara :

This was a campaign launched by the Region in conjunction with the Culture Plan. It was a contest launched 2 years ago encouraging Niagara residents to submit their photos and videos about Niagara.

The photos were evaluated based on: content, image quality, creativity, effectiveness in conveying Niagara's spirit and overall visual appeal.

The images were then used in the Niagara Culture Plan booklet and are now sitting in storage. Since the contest closed in January 2010 'my Niagara' has been left dormant.

An inquiry was made about accessing these submitted photos for our campaign though we were informed that the specific pictures used in the printed Niagara Culture Plan are not available for various reasons pertaining to their being submitted as part of a contest, ect. We were informed that there are lots of community photos available through the Region which weren't part of that contest and asked to contact Corporate Communications for further direction.

[www.wellandtribune.ca/ArticleDisplay](http://www.wellandtribune.ca/ArticleDisplay)

[www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives](http://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives)

## **NIAGARA RESEARCH & PLANNING COUNCIL**

*[Mary Wiley]*

### **Mandate**

- Assists in the development of collaborative, synergistic community planning activities specific to Niagara
- Brings community leader/expert opinion and social scientists together to formulate research questions at hand, facilitate research, interpret recommendations, and engage the community in resulting action plans

### **Actions**

November 2011 Living in Niagara update published

## **BROCK UNIVERSITY**

*[Jack Lightstone]*

### **Mandate**

Building upon its reputation for student engagement and collaborative academic experience of the first order, Brock University will take its place on the Canadian and international stage as a leader and innovator in research, teaching and learning.

In doing so, the University will directly enhance the economic, social, cultural and intellectual lives of the communities around us: Niagara, Ontario, Canada and beyond and will thereby demonstrate the vital ways in which universities of the 21st century can contribute to the betterment of society.

### **Actions (by 2014)**

- Develop an institutional culture rooted in pervasive research and creativity
- Preserve and enhance the quality of undergraduate programs, emphasizing the education of students for leadership, social responsibility and innovation
- Expand graduate and professional programs reflecting the University's research strengths and capacity for innovation, particularly in response to areas of emerging need
- Encourage interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches to research and teaching
- Engage with the community to enhance the economic, social, cultural and intellectual lives of the citizens of Niagara and beyond

## **BROCK - Marketing Communications**

*[Dean Lorenz]*

- Placing Brock University (situating the university in Niagara)
- Communicating the brand promise of 'both sides of the brain'

Developing an innovative and entrepreneurial tone to the 2012 campaign with a focus on one of Niagara's emerging clusters as part of the Cairins Complex.

## **BROCK - Alumni Relations**

*[Meaghan Moore, Christine Jones & Jocelyn Titone]*

- Ongoing connection—communications
- Surgite Magazine
- brockpeople.ca (E-blast: integrating our partners and strategy into alumni publications)
- Alumni Reunion

## **BROCK - Student Life & Community Experience**

*[Brad Clarke, Lindsay Winger, Kristen Smith]*

- Student Leadership & Innovation Commons
- Project SEED (September 2011)
- Project SEED pairing breakfast and project launch sponsored by NEDC (January 17, 2012)

## **BROCK - Recruitment & Liaison Services**

[Matt Melynk]

- Placing Brock in Niagara
- Generating awareness about our campus, our programs and our region
- Gaining direct insight into the issues and challenges facing our marketing

## **BROCK - Career Services**

[Pauline Dawson & Lisa Kuiper]

- Connect & Conquer Niagara Event, November 2011
- Plus Programs (experience, mentorship)

## **Co-Op Programs Office**

[Cara Boese]

- Connecting more students to Niagara businesses
- Placing students within our emerging clusters for the very first time

## **BROCK - International Market Development**

[Rachel Crane]

- Branding Brock /Niagara to students around the world as well as recruiting International talent to Niagara through Brock.

## **NIAGARA COLLEGE**

[Dan Patterson]

### **Mandate**

Enriching lives and fulfilling dreams. Providing outstanding applied education and training for a changing world.

### **Actions**

- Expand programming in areas that align with the economic needs of the Niagara Region, including applied health, new media, skills training and apprenticeships
- Strategically increase the transferability of our credits to other college programs and to university degrees, and ensure appropriate recognition is provided for the learning that students bring to the Niagara Region

- Increase the amount of interdisciplinary programming and opportunities for applied research, fostering cross-divisional students and faculty teams
- Provide greater flexibility in program entry points and delivery options, including on-line delivery
- Enhance services for diverse students, including people seeking new careers, part-time students, aboriginals, students from across Canada, and increasingly students from around the world
- Increase student retention and success, supporting the achievement of career and educational goals

### **Co-Op**

[Kristine Dawson]

- Dealing with the results of business misconceptions concerning the value of co-op placements.
- Communicating that if you want a job (or a co-op opportunity) you need to leave Niagara.
- Seeking greater business education and promotion of Co-Op benefits and in turn greater opportunities for her students

## **CITY OF ST. CATHARINES**

[Marco Marino]

### **Mandate**

Concerned about the economic prosperity of the community and by extension, the quality of life of all citizens. Its purpose will be to drive a business climate conducive to strong business start-up & growth, jobs creation & investment in the skills & future of its labour force. Programs & initiatives that stimulate the local economy's ability to undertake activities, which enhance & enable activity in: innovation, education, enterprise, investment

### **Actions**

- Starting, retaining, expanding and attracting business
- \$1.6 billion of economic activity from public investments in recreation, culture and traditional infrastructure to private investment in manufacturing, commercial and residential development

## **ST. CATHARINES ENTERPRISE CENTRE**

*[Jessica Potts]*

### **Mandate**

The area's premier resource for business start-up information and facilitation of business growth. Clients, largely made up of aspiring entrepreneurs, start-ups and early stage companies in the first 5 years of growth, are served through:

### **Actions**

General business information requests; walk-in and telephone information requests; demographic and statistical research assistance; an extensive reference library and a quiet work area; access to business resource area with hand out material; two internet-linked public access computer workstations with business planning software; business plan review services; one-on-one consultations; seminars and workshops; special events and networking opportunities; referrals to partnering organizations; mentoring programs; grant and loan programs including Canada Youth business Foundation and Ontario Summer Company Program.

## **NIAGARA ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

*[Lisa Cairns]*

### **Mandate**

The Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards (NEYA) honour enterprising people whose businesses have made significant differences in the community, and in our lives. The awards are a symbol of achievement for those innovative entrepreneurs who provide inspiration, exemplify excellence and carry out their unique vision.

### **Actions**

Nominations (regional media coverage, editorial profile, certificate of nomination, recognition and networking opportunities at reception, profiled in multimedia presentation during Gala awards)

Awards (post event advertising, profile on the NEYA website, historical record of achievement and member of alumni group, opportunity to advance to regional and national awards)

## **NGEN | ONTARIO'S DIGITAL INTERACTIVE MEDIA ENGINE**

*[Jeff Chesebrough]*

### **Mandate**

nGen is a hub for interactive digital media projects and business development in Niagara. nGen works to create an innovative business incubation and generation model to help jump-start and grow new enterprise. This initiative is helping to build an interactive digital medicluster in the Niagara region.

nGen's programs are designed to help Niagara retain fresh talent from its two post-secondary institutions, and to attract and assist new business in a context where creators and entrepreneurs can thrive. nGen's core programs include tenancy, mentorship, seminars, networking, interactive digital media projects and providing access to technology.

### **Actions**

Programs: business development, interactive media networking, interactive media projects, recent graduate & entrepreneurs, student internship & co-ops, Noise in Niagara, Ontario Augmented Reality Network, Ontario Digital Interactive Media Engine.





## APPENDIX B

# INTERN TESTIMONIALS & PARTNER BENEFITS

### DETAILS OF THE PROGRAM

NEDC and Brock partnered together for a pilot internship program that ran from September 2011 to April 2012. This pilot project worked; it gave a group of 13 honours students first-hand experience applying their knowledge and creativity in a marketing and communications environment that fosters and promotes new thinking. The project overcame a plethora of obstacles and still managed to introduce students to the opportunities in Niagara and place them in situations that make connections. This gave students the autonomy and confidence to test their theories and capabilities... it encouraged students to engage in the community and gain some ownership over the projects they so heavily influenced. The challenges also taught this group the power of entrepreneurial spirit and the confidence to make change.

This project formed a practical, University-Community relationship. It has set a new standard for others to benchmark

as it positively impacts and evolves the traditional university experience in line with the transitioning economy. The strengths of this program are foundational, and the capabilities unimaginable. Through This is My Niagara, the new economic development model will gain new knowledge and fresh perspectives, tied directly to a student/small business/entrepreneur mentality. The students that we attracted have learned and acquired skills in marketing, public relations, communications, website design and maintenance, desktop publishing, event management, videography and editing.

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Brock University

- Offer course code - half or full major credit
- Meet monthly with students
- Student Evaluation & Major Mark
- Program/Course Code Restructure (for sustainability)
- Promotion of Program

#### Administrative Role

- Coordinate students (scheduling, orientation)
- Monitor students (tracking performance and hours)
- Mentor students
- Weekly & Monthly consultations with students
- Student Evaluations (monthly and biannually)
- Network Opportunities
- Project Administration

#### Interns

- Marketing Communications Management Support
- To gain broad experience
- Complete tasks and projects as assigned
- Share new and fresh ideas
- Marketing & branding Niagara for young talent; Sectoral Projects; engaging SMEs, connecting students; hosting events; nurturing partnerships; changing Niagara.

## BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM: FOR NIAGARA

In order to compete in the pace of our now hyperactive world, we rely on the fresh perspectives of an emerging talent pool. Until recently, we were left to assume our understanding of the new creative class. Today, we derive confidence in our marketing abilities based on the integration of 13 Interns into our marketing communications initiative. We believe in collaboration and are confident in our ability to create a linkage that spans between our educational institutions and local business community.

Throughout the early stages of this process, we have realized that even those of our Interns who have lived in Niagara all their life did not know about the dynamics of our business environment. Many were unaware of our emerging clusters or the sheer volume of businesses successfully operating here. **It is no wonder that we experience difficulty in educating visitors when we have failed to educate our own home grown population.**

This internship allows all stakeholders (from policy makers to business owners, students to mentors) to gain the insight and dialogue of our priority target segment: post-secondary students. Rather than assuming an understanding of this target and attempting to reach them through trial and error, we have engaged an actual sample of this segment to craft the look, feel and verbatim that engages our targets and speaks at a common level.

More importantly, we have gained the opportunity to begin unpacking and modifying the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of this small group, which will ripple through their networks to create a web of new understanding. Already their vocabulary has changed with regard to the opportunities and offerings here in Niagara (see testimonials section of this document). The importance of this need is now clear: 58% of students do not apply to Brock University because of location (the perceptions based on feedback from friends) and 49% of students who have been accepted to Brock for their primary program selection will decline their admission for exactly the same reason.

Finally, we have solidified a mutually beneficial partnership with Brock University that promotes a Business-Education / University-Community partnership, similar in nature to best practices identified across North America. We have initiated a program that strengthens the bonds between our higher education institution, the business community, and the residential community at large. What sets This is My Niagara apart is the structured platform upon which the program rests. We are unique in our willingness to allow young talent to directly craft messaging; to embed young talent in regional economic development practices; and in creating a platform for emerging and landmark sectors to call on for youth driven action initiatives. This is My Niagara is designed (and proven) to take charge and make change — 100% action driven. Yes a Google-like think-tank component is included, the root of this initiative is to take new solutions and hit the streets; Niagara needs to see change happening right before their eyes... This is My Niagara accomplishes just that.

These individuals also bring with them a new and updated skill set. Several have experience with top graphic design programs such as Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator and Dreamweaver. Some have a background in HTML web production; some boast a background in video production and editing. Some have a rich journalism background and all have an incredibly defined ability to integrate the social science of communication with a well-established business mentality.

# **BROCK UNIVERSITY**

## **COMMUNICATION, POPULAR CULTURE & FILM**

This internship program allows our students to gain those practical experiences to substantiate their degree by pairing their theoretical studies with genuine and creative work.

3,939 new full time students in 2011.  
70% of them are from outside niagara.





The benefits of this program are numerous. Not only are our students gaining real world experience and praxis, where they are translating theory into practice, and truly living the both sides of the brain brand promise. Brock promotes quite vigorously the development of both left and right sides of the brain, and an internship program such as this invites this dual development, and allows our students to pick up practical skills during University that they typically associate with and expect to gain through a college post-degree. Today, employers are seeking opportunities to better their bang for buck with a new hire, so it is crucial for our students to be prepared beyond the scope of academia. This Internship provides us the space to have our students show off the interdisciplinary capabilities of a typical Brock student.

This internship program allows our students to gain those practical experiences and substantiate their degree by pairing their theoretical studies with genuine and creative work. This opportunity also develops their own personal sense of confidence and ability. These experiences also give students a real taste of their interests and a sense of purpose and direction, which again increases their confidence. The Internship gives our students the opportunity to test their hypotheses and try the things they are interested in to determine whether or not it is truly something they will aspire towards.

At a broader level, we see this Internship program becoming part of Brock's employability. These are hard numbers that we can test. The level of our students' employability after graduation was substantially increased because of the on-the-job training they receive during their period of education here at Brock. Equally important is the ability for our Interns to reflect on their three years of study already completed at Brock.

We also promote community building through this Internship by endorsing the flow between what happens at the institution and what is happening in the surrounding environment. This integration benefits all three parties: the University, the community of employers and the student Interns. At a more focused level, we are building the community also within our very own faculty and department.

The results are very much cyclical. Our students become immersed and empowered in the field and based on the outcome of effective networking, are likely to be hired on either through the organization with whom they Intern or by a connection they made along the way. Once employed, the past Interns are more likely to believe in the power of an Internship and haul on board new Interns. **This produces a cycle of positive flow between the University and the Business Community within Niagara.** Students walk away with a genuine regard for their Brock degree and become ambassadors for the quality of education we provide.

Within the department, it is our job to present these opportunities to students, though it becomes their onus to take the initiative to make the Internship happen. Knowing these opportunities exist means we can start fashioning our students from the onset of their University career to help prepare them for employer demands and create an employable skill set through the practical courses we offer (ie. Desktop Publishing & Design and Video Production).

Demand exists for our students and we are working hard to professionalize our talent pool, and the Internship program is a direct extension of this. Having these opportunities provides a constant reward system for students with regard to merit, ability and excellence. **It is a concerted effort to connect our emerging talent pool with the local business community, in which all parties begin to realize the potential of our students (including the students themselves).**



## INTERN PERSPECTIVE

*What Do The Interns Have to Say? A Few Select Testimonials*

In order to determine the true benefits of this program we asked our interns to briefly reflect on their experiences thus far. Here is what they had to say:

To date, the Internship has given us the autonomy to create and see our ideas translated into tangible materials. It has given us the confidence to believe in ourselves and the quality of work we are capable of producing. It has given us the structure to construct our network and it has given us the endorsement of leaders in our community.

### FROM THE NIAGARA REGION

For those of us who have lived here all our lives we are thrilled to see our region being discovered for those things we are truly proud of. We are uncovering all of the hidden gems that have been kept quiet and not realized to their full potential. We're excited to be working with the NEDC and showing people from all over just how awesome our home region can be, from the wineries and waterfalls that everyone knows about to the lesser known gems here like tantalizing restaurants, sunny beaches, unbelievably skilled crafts people, and innovative scientists and engineers making world-changing discoveries. We enjoy being a part of "This is My Niagara" because we have lived in Niagara our whole life and have really grown to appreciate the sights, activities, and the people within and would like to show other people all that we have to offer!



#### **Diana**

I have lived in Niagara my whole life and felt I was aware of what it had to offer but I have to admit that after my first orientation at the regional offices and viewing all the promotional material for "This Is My Niagara", my perspective on the area has completely changed. I had no idea about some of the incredible industries we had here, like bioscience and engineering, which could offer valuable career prospects and make Niagara a truly world-class business region. I am more excited than ever to be living and studying here now that my eyes have been opened even further to the vibrant nature of Niagara, the place I call home today and plan to for many years to come.



### **Courtney**

It is important to increase workforce attraction in the Niagara region as it is actually a beautiful place to live and work, and if we increase workforce attraction then maybe we can offer more opportunities for our residents. It is actually very sad that we don't offer enough opportunities for people to work here, forcing people to leave, when the region is such an amazing place. The wine industry and Niagara Falls are not the only things the Niagara region has to offer. It is important that we spread the word about all the important things that the Niagara region has to offer in order to increase workforce attraction in the area and get students to stay here after college.



### **Kate**

I have lived in St. Catharines my entire life, so one would think I would be very familiar with the Niagara Region. I did not fully appreciate the area until after I came back from spending 5 months in Australia and realized how truly beautiful it was here. I am so thankful for having this opportunity to Intern because it has opened my eyes to how much we have here in Niagara. I wanted to participate in this program because I want to display to other people all that Niagara has to offer and how lucky we are to be living in this region, and also to show all of the opportunities there are here, and that it is not just Niagara Falls.



### **Sarah**

The amazing people you meet and the experience of working for an initiative like "This is My Niagara" is the perfect set-up to establishing yourself in the real-world. I have worked with "This is My Niagara" since I became an intern and have watched it grow from a simple campaign into a full-fledged initiative, which is currently gaining support from various regional and institutional standpoints. It is the students who want to see this city grow and become better because it's a great place to live - it just needs the attention. I think students are also more willing to speak openly with those in the community about issues the public is facing and what Niagara can do about those problems.



### **Tamar**

At the start of this internship, I thought we were going to do small things, intern things. I was relatively shocked that we got to do so much and gain so much experience. Students need to gain the work experience before they leave school, and the Region needs the fresh new look that young people can provide. The Niagara Region is a great area; it just needs to be promoted more. I think Brock University and the Niagara Region will positively benefit from the CPCF interns.



### **Kristina**

I truly believe that this internship has merit towards the future of Niagara. Creating an academic outlet for eager and creative students to use their skills in a productive manner is crucial to the marketing of the area. What better way to attract the initiative's target market than have it come *from* the target market? The internship provides a step between University and the working world where theoretical concepts can be applied and concepts can be utilized.

## NEW TO THE NIAGARA REGION

For those of us who have only lived here during our time at Brock, our perceptions about the region have already shifted towards a much more positive portrayal. Our perceptions of the Niagara region have greatly improved in the short time we have spent with this internship and am very confident that as we move ahead, more students will be positively affected, greatly increasing the likelihood of this campaign being a success. With only a few weeks into the project we have discovered that Niagara has a lot more to offer than we originally thought.



### Chris

This initiative is an extremely clever and innovative idea. The Niagara region is known for two things, and that is Niagara Falls and the wine region; the falls and wineries are beautiful attractions, but by stepping outside of those areas tourists and residences can discover how much there actually is to offer in this region. The project will showcase the successful individuals and companies that run out of this region; once the community realizes how much there is to offer I think they will be shocked because it seems the issue in this community is simply knowing what there is to do. As we move along with this project and keep updating the community families will realize that they are ingrained in such a vast culture and something they can discover. The interns took off to the Howells pumpkin patch to take pictures of what there is to do in the community around the fall season. The amount of individuals that asked why we were wearing matching shirts and what we were doing was amazing.



### Lauren

My thoughts on Niagara prior to the internship were that it has beautiful scenery since it is apart of the Niagara escarpment. I also associate Niagara with wineries and schools such as Brock and Niagara College. I think St. Catharines is a city centered around the University, because students are never really encouraged to explore different local restaurants or activities in the region beside the bars and chain restaurants. Now being a part of This is My Niagara I am aware there are more things to do in Niagara besides wine tours, casinos and bars. It also has encouraged me to get out and explore events unique to the region such as the wine festival.



### Deanna

Before moving to the City of St. Catharines, I was not entirely sure what the city held for me. All I knew was Niagara Falls and rumors of a grungy area. Once I moved here I became much more optimistic. This internship at This is My Niagara has shown me so much more I did not know about where I live. I have lived here for three years and I just found out about the wineries within Niagara-on-the-Lake and the ones around the corner. I do not believe the city does enough promoting because the antisocial species we have become do not know the extent of activities and landscape beauty that is within this region.



### **Mike**

Although I have only been apart of the TIMN internship for about a month, I feel that it has already had a huge impact on my perception of the Niagara region. By the end of last year (my 3rd year) I can recall telling people I have one year left then I am never coming back to Brock again. I did not want to be in the area because I did not see the opportunities available to me and I wanted to go somewhere else to either further my education or begin my professional life. These perceptions have all but changed since my time with this internship. By reading the initiative outlines for both “This Is My Niagara” and the “Niagara Social Project”, I realized how much the Niagara region really does have to offer. I had always known about the beautiful scenery that the region had to offer, but I never put the job opportunities into perspective or how close we are to Toronto and the United States as well. I now find myself asking others what they are going to do after graduation and telling them some specific reasons as to why they should remain in the Niagara region to look for work. This initiative can definitely be beneficial; we just have to ensure it is heard by as many students as possible.



### **Dan**

Entering the internship at the beginning of the year I was already aware of many wonderful aspects of the Niagara Region but after several months I was blown away by how much I didn't know, how much more the region has to offer. Coming out of the internship I have been able to connect with many different people from around the region and it has become clear that most of them would love to see the region reach its full potential. The opportunity has come for all to work together to make our goals a reality.



### **Hilary**

“This is My Niagara” can be and I think is going to be something bigger. The efforts and attitudes that have gone into this initiative are amazing amongst all the hurdles we've overcome to create something exciting not only for future interns but for local businesses and the region as a whole. I truly think that “This is My Niagara” can change perceptions of the region and convince people to give the 12 municipalities a shot.



For more information on This is My Niagara  
visit [www.thisismyniagara.com](http://www.thisismyniagara.com)  
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