



# COVID-19 Research on Trails and Outdoor Recreation: What We've Learned So Far

The Ontario Trails Council in partnership with Frank Company, Brock University and Trans Canada Trail presents a trail management webinar.

**Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>  
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. ET.**

## Learning Objectives:

1. Understand what three research projects suggest about the impacts of COVID-19 on trail management communities, outdoor recreation behaviours, and protected area communication strategies.
2. Appreciate the impacts of change in outdoor recreation participation due to COVID-19's effects on mental, physical and emotional health.
3. Recognize factors that influence trail communities and outdoor recreationists' decision-making during COVID-19.
4. Envision management strategies for maintaining quality trails and outdoor recreation participation based on current trends.
5. What have we learned from 2020, and how can we prepare effectively for 2021?

## Target Audience:

1. Trail managers – municipal, conservation authority, private sector.
2. Front line maintenance staff and volunteers.
3. Organization decision makers.
4. Anyone involved with trails and/or outdoor recreation management.

## Presenters:

- Dr. Tim O'Connell, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University
- Michael Goodyear, Trail Development Manager for Eastern Canada, Trans Canada Trail
- John Foster, Research Assistant, Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative, Brock University

## Agenda:

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|--------------------------|---|
| 10:00 a.m. to 10:05 a.m. | Introductions and opening remarks – Dr. Garrett Hutson, Brock University and OTC Board Member |
| 10:05 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. | Dr. Tim O'Connell, Brock University   |
| 10:25 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. | Michael Goodyear, Trans Canada Trail  |
| 10:45 a.m. to 11:05 a.m. | John Foster, Brock University   |
| 11:05 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. | Summary – Dr. Garrett Hutson  |
| 11:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. | Q&A and closing remarks   |

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This webinar is free to OTC members and Frank Cowan Company clients, all other registrations are \$29.00.



## Presenters

### **Dr. Tim O'Connell, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University**

Tim O'Connell has a Ph.D. in recreation resource management from New York University and is a professor at Brock University in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Tim's teaching and research specializes in outdoor recreation, outdoor education and reflective practice. Dr. O'Connell has over 20 years' experience in higher education and over 30 years' experience as an outdoor recreation professional. Tim is the Co-Editor of Research in Outdoor Education, Co-Chair of the Research Advisory Committee for Outward Bound Canada and has worked for several outdoor recreation service providers in both Canada and the United States.

O'Connell is the principal investigator of a national, multiphase study exploring the impacts of COVID-19 on outdoor recreation participation in Canada. Tim's program of research also includes mental health aspects of participating in outdoor recreation, development of psychological sense of community in outdoor recreation groups, motivations to engage in outdoor recreation, impacts of outdoor orientation programs on university students' success, and reflective practice.

Dr. O'Connell is a 3M National Teaching Fellow, a Senior Instructor for the State University of New York at Cortland, Department of Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies' Outdoor Education Practicum and received the Dorothy Walters Leadership Award from the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario. He is the founder of Brock BaseCamp, an outdoor orientation program for incoming students at Brock University. Tim is an avid paddler, cyclist and rock climber.

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### **Michael Goodyear, Trail Development Manager for Eastern Canada, Trans Canada Trail**

Michael is a graduate of Fleming College, with a degree in Ecosystem Management, and of York University, having earned a B.A. in Resource Management.

After graduating, Michael worked with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, managing conservation lands and recreational trails, and completing various community stewardship programs. Michael joined Trans Canada Trail in 2014, playing an active role in achieving cross-country connection of The Great Trail of Canada in 2017. He works with hundreds of trail partners across Eastern Canada and assists them with trail development, granting and permitting, as well as management and sustainability.

### **John Foster, Research Assistant, Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative, Brock University**

John Foster is a graduate student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies within the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University and is currently working as a research assistant for the Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative (TATI) housed within Brock's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre. The TATI is a collaborative partnership between Brock University, the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) and the Ontario Trails Council (OTC). The partners have identified a shared interest in collaborating on projects of mutual benefit with a focus on trails and trail tourism.

While studying Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Sustainability during his undergraduate degree, John worked for Ontario Parks as a Park Warden and Senior Operations Technician. It was a combination of his time spent at Brock and his experiences working for Ontario Parks that have led him to develop a passion and research interest in studying how Ontario's parks and protected areas are managed, with a focus on public policy communication. Tasked with providing an overview of COVID-19 communications for parks and protected areas for the TATI, John completed document analyses on a variety of parks and protected areas agencies within Ontario and other global jurisdictions comparable to the Ontario context to identify best practices. This consisted of examining webpages and social media outlets (primarily Twitter and Facebook) to gauge communication quality and impact. In his spare time, John participates in a variety of recreation. He primarily enjoys canoeing, camping and cycling (or combinations of the three!) as well as running and playing ultimate.

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