

Greenbelt Foundation Backgrounder

Niagara Geopark

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Overview

The Greenbelt Foundation has announced a new grant to the Niagara Peninsula Aspiring Global Geopark (NPAGG). The NPAGG is seeking to secure a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Geopark designation for the Niagara Peninsula. This would be the first UNESCO geopark located in Ontario and sixth in Canada. To support the Geopark application, NPAGG has developed broad partnerships with tourism, conservation, academic, agricultural and Indigenous organizations located in the Niagara region.

The UNESCO Global Geopark designation is given to single, unified geographical areas with sites and landscapes of international geological significance. Global Geoparks are managed with a holistic view of protection, education, and sustainable development.

Niagara Peninsula Aspiring Global Geopark is working with a variety of partners to support the Geopark designation application including Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara College, Great Wolf Lodge Niagara Falls Water Resort, Willowbank School for Restoration Arts, and Upper Canada Stone.

Background

UNESCO has been involved with Geoparks since 2001. By 2004, 17 European and eight Chinese Geoparks came together to form the *Global Geoparks Network* to promote increased international cooperation and exchange of knowledge. A UNESCO Global Geopark uses its geological heritage, in connection with all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage, to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues such as conservation, climate change, and biodiversity.

In order to receive its Global Geopark designation, NPAGG plans to host an international delegation from UNESCO in 2023. In preparation for the delegation visit next year, NPAGG is undertaking a variety of activities to raise awareness for the project. Development of marketing and tourism plans are already underway, and plans are being prepared to install over 100 signs across the region to provide wayfinding and educational content. Development is also underway of Niagara-based itineraries for unique hiking opportunities and important Indigenous sites and trails.

The five current Global Geoparks in Canada are:

- Stonehammer UGGp, New Brunswick
- Tumbler Ridge UGGp, British Columbia
- Percé UGGp, Quebec
- Cliffs of Fundy UGGp, Nova Scotia
- Discovery UGGp, Newfoundland and Labrador

About Greenbelt Foundation:

Greenbelt Foundation is a charitable organization, solely dedicated to ensuring the Greenbelt remains permanent, protected and prosperous. We make the right investments in its interconnected natural, agricultural, and economic systems, to ensure a working, thriving Greenbelt for all. Ontario's Greenbelt is the world's largest, with over two million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands and rivers working together to provide clean air, fresh water, and a reliable local food source.

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