

IDW Expands its Reach

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In the [Strategic Plan 2017-2022](#), Seneca describes its future as an international institution that embraces and reflects globalism, citizenship, and pluralism. To contribute to this future, Seneca joined institutions across Canada to mark February 4-9 as International Development Week (IDW). Organized by a group of current and former students working with the International Mobility Office, IDW offered a series of workshops and discussions that allowed Senecans the opportunity to examine global issues from a multitude of perspectives, and meet people and organizations involved in tackling global challenges.



This year, the goal of IDW was to link events with academic courses that resonated with event themes. Below, a few faculty who took advantage of IDW's experiential offerings share their experiences.

Exploring Extinctions by Carmen Schlamb

Students of NAT111 – Exploring Environmental Relationships know that extinction of any kind limits possibilities on the planet. Through their transdisciplinary approach to environmental studies, students in the course are able to deepen their inquiry of environmental issues to better understand the multiple connections we hold with the natural world and with each other. For many students in the course, their understanding of extinction was further broadened during Seneca's International Development Week when they spent time with Mama Adobea Nii Owoo (Ph.D student with OISE), and Dr. Brock Pitawanakwat (Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, York University) during the panel presentation dedicated to *Empowerment Through Preservation: Indigenous Languages*. In this session,



students learned how languages become endangered, how the extinction of indigenous languages could have far-reaching effects on our future sustainability, and how language revitalization may be the key to regaining some of

what has been lost. By the end of the session, participants were able to share a greater understanding of why UNESCO nominated 2019 as the “International Year of Indigenous Languages.”

Creating Experiential Connections through IDW by Robin Potter

When IDW organizers wanted to connect courses with its speaker series, I saw the potential for sending my ENG205 students on an interdisciplinary, experiential learning journey that could transform this Applied Communication for Business and Industry course from a routine course into a truly applied experience. Aligning the major project with the IDW session on social entrepreneurship supported a course redesign using a flexible, learner-centered, problem-solving approach. Creating a multi-faceted project involved inviting social entrepreneurs to participate.

The IDW team was instrumental in connecting my ENG205 students with the professionals who demonstrated how a commitment to social innovation can grow businesses that respond to need and make a positive change in the world: Chris Dudley of [HELIX](#) visited our class to speak about disruptive innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset, and Nurjahan Begum of [Progoti.ca](#) discussed her business model that has ethical investing at its core. In addition, at an IDW session, Fernando Russo of [Meraki Impact](#) and Chris Dudley engaged in a dialogue that defined and described social entrepreneurship with the help of examples and insights grounded in their experiences in supporting local and global sustainable development projects.



While my ENG205 students are involved in proposing small, local sustainable development initiatives for their proposal assignment, they are now also experimenting with the entrepreneurial mindset, which embraces important 21st Century Competencies: empathy, innovation, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, agility, and collaboration. Our course has in the process become a flexible learning ecosystem. Yes, learners must meet the learning outcomes by producing business communication artefacts that demonstrate their knowledge and skills, but they are gaining so much more since their work is driven by purpose, not only by marks. Thanks to the connections created by the IDW team, the students will also be receiving invaluable feedback from the entrepreneurs who have agreed to hear their pitches and review the student team proposals to be submitted through the [Riipen](#) platform. Feedback from these professionals will make what would otherwise be one-dimensional assignments about fictitious situations into living artefacts carrying great potential.

Very special thanks to the IDW team, the entrepreneurs, and Seneca’s Riipen team, who each

entered our learning ecosystem at key moments to make this possible.

Sustainable Development Goals by Grace Lee

As part of Seneca's IDW 2019, organizers reached out to the Foundation for Environmental Stewardship – a youth-led, youth-serving sustainable development organization – and invited them to deliver a full-day training on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Upon completion, students would be presented with a UN certification. My colleague, Christine Doody-Hamilton, suggested incorporating the training into our first year EVS141 - Environmental Science course. All students were required to attend/participate as part of an assignment. A major focus of the course is environmental sustainability and sustainable design/systems. The SDGs are introduced in the classroom but the training supported the lecture material with a unique applied approach. It turned out to be a great learning experience on many fronts, as close to 300 students filled the Great Hall on a Saturday. The group was introduced to current global environmental issues by respected United Nations representatives. This immediately brought the audience together as global citizens with a shared respect for the environment. Students were also able to network with participants of diverse backgrounds. Sharing/learning different perspectives gives everyone the cross-disciplinary approach for effective problem solving. I look forward to introducing more students to this type of experiential learning opportunity. This training also highlights many of the Seneca's core values such as respect, community, and diversity. For more information on sustainable development goals, please visit [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).



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