2018 Excellence Award Entry
Communication, Education, Marketing Tool
Niagara Region - Recycle your Bicycle

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Population: 431,346 | Households: 184,160
Budget: $1,000 | Cost: $0.005/household
Executive Summary

Niagara Region Waste Management Services recognized an opportunity to recover unwanted or damaged bicycles in favour of reuse and entered into a valuable community partnership with the Broken Spoke Bicycle Refurbishment Program. Through an extensive public information campaign, Niagara Region has been able to provide the Broken Spoke with 2,970 bicycles since the inception of this partnership in 2016. These bicycles were repaired and donated to community members, charitable organizations, and communities overseas.

This unique partnership and bicycle recycling program promotes active lifestyles through access to bicycle transportation, provides students with a skills base to earn a school credit for their work, and provides an outlet for those who would like to dispose of their bikes, regardless of the condition. By using a multi-tiered approached to promotion, Niagara Region has been able to provide the Broken Spoke with hundreds of bicycles for repair and promote the 3R’s hierarchy.
Research

Niagara Region was collecting bicycles for scrap metal recycling at its Drop-off Depots and through the curbside Large Item Collection service. It was estimated that approximately 800 – 1,000 bicycles each year were collected in combination with the Drop-off Depots and Large Item Collection service, and although they were being recycled, Niagara Region wanted to explore the option of reuse to bring these bicycles back to life.

Research

In 2015, Niagara Region started conducting research to see what other Ontario municipalities were doing with their unwanted or damaged bicycles. Some municipalities were only interested in receiving bicycles that were still in working order and would let residents help themselves to the working bicycles, while other programs would take unwanted and/or damaged bicycles for repair.

Niagara Region wanted to upgrade its diversion activities from recycling to reuse, which is further up the 3R’s hierarchy, and has greater environmental, economic and social benefits. Niagara Region was already in partnership with a few local charity organizations through the operation of their Reusable Goods Drop-off, and there were conversations with these groups to determine their potential interest. Lacking during the search for the right partnership was the ability to repair the bicycles.

In the same year, the Principal of Port Colborne High School and Mr. Foley, the program volunteer approached Niagara Region, through the Public Works Committee to explore a potential partnership.

Partnership

In 2015, Niagara Region Waste Management staff met with the Principal of Port Colborne High School, Mr. Foley, and the Superintendent of Education at the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) to discuss opportunities for a partnership which would allow Mr. Foley and other representatives to pick up bicycles dropped off at Niagara Region’s four (4) Waste and Recycling Depots and Recycling Centre.

In 2016, Niagara Region entered into a Permission to Enter Agreement with the District School Board of Niagara to act as a source to provide for damaged, unwanted, and bicycles in need of repair for the Broken Spoke bicycle refurbishing program at Port Colborne High School.

The Broken Spoke

The Broken Spoke is a community based non-profit organization at Port Colborne High School and is part of the High School Special skills credit program. The bikes that are
refurbished through the program are donated to people in need within the community, charities, and associated organizations that donate the bikes to third world countries.

At the High School, Mr. Foley, a volunteer, coaches the students to learn skills required for refurbishing bicycles. Students refurbish and repair bicycles for reuse. The program engages students in learning skills and understanding the benefits of refurbishing bicycles to provide personal (physical exercise, transportation), environmental and socioeconomic benefits. Students receive a credit under the High School Special credit program, as they learn skills that prepare them for further education or employment. Students involved with this program also learn the value of giving back to the community and the importance of reuse/recycling.

All bicycles refurbished through the program are donated to local and international charities, organizations and individuals in need. The program does not compete with local businesses which repair bicycles.

According to the Principal of Port Colborne High School, this is the first high school in Canada to offer such a program, and Niagara Region is proud to be a supporting partner.

**Planning and Goal Setting**

The target audience for the public information campaign includes the general public to inform them of this great reuse program, as well as charity organizations that could benefit from receiving repaired bicycles.

**Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of overall public information campaign is to educate the general public about re-use options for unwanted bicycles or bicycles in need of repair in order to reduce waste going to landfill or lower tier recycling options. Through emphasizing the environmental and social benefits of refurbishing bicycles for reuse over recycling bicycles through scrap metal recovery, the Region has been able to use their Drop-off
Depots as an outlet to collectively increase the amount of bicycles donated to the Broken Spoke community bicycle refurbishment program.

Public information campaign objectives include:

- Promote the 3R’s hierarchy by informing audiences of the benefits of bringing bicycles to one of the following drop-off locations: Bridge Street Drop-off Depot, Humberstone Landfill site, Niagara Road 12 Landfill site, Niagara Region Recycling Centre, and Walker Environmental Waste and Drop-off Depot.
- Divert material from landfill/lower tier recycling options in favour of re-se options for the environmental, social and health benefits

Niagara residents drop off used bicycles, at one of the four Regional Residential Waste and Recycling Drop-off Depots, which includes the Walker Residential Waste and Drop-off Depot. Residents pay no tipping fee for dropping off bicycles these regional sites. Prior to the implementation of the program, the estimated volume of bicycles dropped off at the three regional sites is between 800 and 1,000 annually. The objective of the program was to capture the estimated 1,000 bicycles recycled annually through scrap metal recycling in favour of reuse. Through program promotion, the number of bicycles received at the Drop-off Depots has continued to increase.

Measurable objectives of the public information campaign include:

- Number of bicycles diverted and provided to the Broken Spoke program

**Timeframe**

The official partnership between Niagara Region and the District School Board of Niagara began in 2016 and the public information campaign has continued since the inception in order to receive as many bicycles from Drop-off Depots and Regional sites as possible. It is important to continually promote the program in order to ensure the message is getting out to the general public and associated charities with those in need of a bicycle. The program started collecting bicycles for the Broken Spoke program in April 2016.

**Budget**

The overall 2016 budget for the public information campaign other than staff time was approximately $1,000 for the development of an information rack card to promote the message of ‘Recycle your Bicycle. The card would be designed and printed internally with an overall cost of $0.005 per household. There is no additional operating cost for setting aside the bicycles at Walker’s Drop-off Depot and Regional sites.

Below is a table that outlines the promotional tactic and the associated cost/budget.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost/Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feature article in the Green Scene Newsletter</td>
<td>Article featuring the program and drop-off options. Photos taken at the school location. Article to detail environmental, social and health benefits of bicycle re-use and Drop-off Depot options</td>
<td>Already included in 2016 budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updates to Niagara Region’s Website</td>
<td>Update relevant search tool/enviro-guide entries with bicycle re-use drop-off options</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper ads in regional newspapers</td>
<td>Advertisement to raise awareness of residents of bicycle drop-off/re-use option at the Drop-off Depots.</td>
<td>Use in-kind advertising space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Release/Photo Op</td>
<td>Media release announcing our cooperation with Broken Spoke program and new drop-off options for bicycles for the program with photo-op at the school.</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation to Community Services/Public Health (active transportation group)/Cycling organizations</td>
<td>Invite Broken Spoke rep to provide a presentation of the program to our relevant Community Services and Public Health divisions and local organizations.</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Posts</td>
<td>Create Facebook and Twitter posts to inform residents of bicycle re-use drop-off options at the Drop-off Depots.</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Card for distribution at drop-off depots, information booths and active transportation committee</td>
<td>Create card which will detail where to drop off and what happens to bicycles. Benefits of diverting bicycles to re-use.</td>
<td>$1000</td>
</tr>
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**Implementation**

With the Region’s interest in providing a reusable product by promoting reuse rather than collecting bicycles for scrap metal recycling, the following key messages were developed.

**Recycle your Bicycle Key Messages**

- Bicycles dropped off at the Region’s Drop-off Depots, Recycling Centre and Walker Residential Drop-off Depot will be collected and provided to the Broken Spoke program for refurbishment. (Bicycles that are beyond repair may be used for bicycle parts in the refurbishment program.)
- There are environmental, social and health (active transportation) benefits to the bicycles being reused compared to recycled through scrap metal recycling
- Local and international charities and organizations that have patrons who could benefit from a refurbished bicycle can contact The Broken Spoke program

**Considerations and Challenges**

The approval process for the partnership agreement took longer than expected given the nature of the partnership with the local District School Board. Liability concerns had
to be addressed, allowing Mr. Foley permission to enter Niagara Region sites to collect bicycles, and protecting Niagara Region in the event that anything were to happen to the bicycles after they were donated to an individual.

There were certain strategic considerations that were taken into advisement when drafting messaging for the program while aiming to create promotional material with messages that will mitigate the impacts of the following considerations:

- Local businesses that offer repair services may perceive being in competition with The Broken Spoke program
- Bicycles collected curbside will not be diverted for The Broken Spoke program
- Over promotion of The Broken Spoke program could result in high volumes of donated bicycles exceeding the capacity that the program can currently handle
- Other charity/non-profit organizations may want similar consideration for access to bicycles for refurbishment

Another factor to consider was promoting the Recycle your Bicycle message at our sites, and how the program would handle influx of bicycles to be received as a result of Niagara Region’s promotional efforts. As a result, the school was able to expand the program to include more students, but a plan was needed in order to handle storage for the increase in the amount of bicycles. The school utilized a crawl space to house the bicycles until they are ready to bring them into the shop to start repairs. Niagara Region only had temporary storage at their sites until they are pick-up or dropped off.

**Public Information Campaign**
The plan for the public information campaign was to make residents aware of how to provide retired bicycles and bicycles in need of repair to The Broken Spoke program through the Region’s Drop-off Depots, Recycling Centre and/or Walker Residential Drop-off Depot. Costs to implement the information campaign were true to the proposed budget and the informational rack card remained under budget. The public information campaign, including the rack card print tool, was a new tool developed to promote this new program.

**Print Tool**
The Recycle your Bicycle rack card promotes reuse options for bicycles, where the end result provides students with a skill base to earn a school credit. Students become more familiar with bicycle mechanics and promoting healthy lifestyles through access to bicycle transportation. This program provides an outlet for those who would like to dispose of their bikes, regardless of the condition, where in the end it will provide a new bike for an deserving individual within the community.
The Recycle your Bicycle rack card continues to be distributed at information booths at community events, and Residential Waste and Recycling Depots, receiving ongoing promotion by Port Colborne High School and the Broken Spoke. The same look and feel of the rack card was used to create an advertisement in the Green Scene. With advertising in the Green Scene, and physical distribution at 74 events through information booths from April 2016 to December 2017, it is estimated this print tool reached over 200,000 homes.
Newspaper Articles
Under the Blue Box Program Plan, members of the Canadian Newspaper Association (CNA) and the Ontario Community Newspapers Association (OCNA) contribute newspaper advertising to municipalities in lieu of cash funding. Newspaper articles were developed for both the CAN and the OCNA advertising the Recycle your Bicycle message in 2016. These advertisements would have appeared in all twelve (12) newspapers reaching all twelve (12) municipalities within Niagara region.
Media Events
On June 14, 2016 a photo opportunity took place at Niagara Region’s Humberstone Waste and Recycling Drop-off Depot, in Welland Ontario with students and staff from Port Colborne High School and staff from Niagara Region. A media advisory was released on May 31, 2016 to notify the media for photos and interviews about the program.

Social Media
Social media posts, on Facebook and Twitter happen throughout the year reminding residents that they can drop off unwanted, damaged or bicycles in need of repair at a Niagara Region Drop-off Depot. Posts are also shared on social media to advise the public when bicycles have been repaired by the program, and are on their way to a particular charity.

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Niagara Region
September 13, 2017 ·  
Do you have a broken or unused bike? Bicycles in any condition dropped off at Niagara Region landfill sites will be collected for refurbishment and repair by students at Port Colborne High School, through the Broke Spoke Program. Repaired bicycles will then be provided to those in need.
New opportunities
By promoting the Recycle your Bicycle message and partnering with the Broken Spoke, Niagara Region has been able to connect likeminded people in the community with each other for the benefit of fixing and repairing bicycles for those in need. In fact, a person hired at one of Niagara Region’s Drop-off Depots has started a similar program in another nearby high school in another municipality within Niagara region. He has taken over handling the bicycles that are donated at that particular Depot, and works closely with Mr. Foley and the school repairing bicycles in his own workshop. He has also been able to connect with other charitable organizations in his area, and has been a valuable link in continuing to promote our message.

Additionally in 2017, fifty five (55) bicycles provided by Niagara Region were repaired by the students at Port Colborne High School, and were donated to a community organization called Community Care, to give as Christmas gifts during the holidays.
Results

Results are measured through the amount of bicycles that are collected at Residential Drop-off Depots, and the amount of bicycles that a repaired through the Broken Spoke program.

Since development of the partnership in 2016, Niagara Region has collected a total of 2,970 bicycles at their Residential Waste and Recycling Depots for reuse in the Broken Spoke Program. To date, the Broken Spoke program has refurbished and donated a total of 5,149 for those in need in Niagara Region communities and communities overseas in Haiti and Africa.

The table below breaks down the donations of bicycles at each of the sites.

Table 1: Bicycle donations at each site

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Count</td>
<td>Weight (Tonnes)</td>
<td>Total Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberstone</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Street</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Road 12</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling Centre</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker Environmental</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>17.12</td>
<td>1,580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first full year of the program was 2017 collecting a total of 1,580 bicycles. Based on Q1 2018 results, we are on track to collect the same amount of bicycles as last year as the majority of bicycles are collected during the milder months. With additional promotion, and the more people learn of the program there is the potential to exceed this amount. Therefore, the goal to capture the estimated 800 – 1,000 collected annually for scrap metal recycled has been achieved, with the intention to collect as many as possible by promoting the Recycle your Bicycle message.
Bicycles donated directly to the school as a result of the public information campaign are not tracked by Niagara Region, but are included in the total number of bicycles repaired through the Broken Spoke program. Program volunteers part of the Broken Spoke have indicated that the number of bicycles drop-off on site at the High School have increased due to promotional efforts by Niagara Region. The general public and community organizations are grateful for the repaired bicycles provided back to the community, and are excited to learn of the program through the public information campaign. Residents are eager to provide their bicycles to such a great cause, and are often happy to get rid of the broken bicycles they thought were no longer of use.

The Broken Spoke is able to provide bicycles to community organization to help improve their quality of life. For example, the Broken Spoke was able to fulfill the request of a local charity to provide a client with a bicycle in order to access a job opportunity. In a similar situation, a bicycle was provided to a female client for the same purpose.

Impact
The Principal at Port Colborne High School suggests that the program is the foundation for many of the students that refurbish the bikes as part of their high school credit. The students enjoy learning the mechanical skills that bring the bikes back to the condition where they are able to be donated to those in need. Mr. Foley has explained the impact of fixing a bicycle, and witnessing that bicycle being donated to an individual in need as a truly rewarding experience. Receiving bikes from Regional depots allows the program to continue to receive high volumes of bicycles for reuse and to continue to support members in the community. Providing a larger number of bicycles also helps to expand the program to involve more students. Enrollment in the Broken Spoke program has grown from three (3) students to nine (9) students since 2016.

Bicycles are provided to both children and adults in need within the community as a mode of transportation and enjoyment. They have made the difference in the life of migrant workers who have no way to getting to work, new members of the community who have immigrated to Canada, and to many children who have not experienced the joy of riding a bike.
Below are a few articles and social media posts indicating the success of the program and partnership:

- [Port Colborne High School website – Broken Spoke Bike Program](#)
- [The Broken Spoke - Your TV](#)
- [Region partners with Broken Spokes](#)
- [Broken Spoke bikes a blessing for new Canadians](#)
**Evaluation**

It is important to remember that promotion of Recycle your Bicycle message does not stop after program implementation, and that ongoing promotion will ensure longevity of the program and that the public information campaign continues and that in order to increase the number of bicycles received at Drop-off Depots.

**Improvement**

As it is, the program is running well and Niagara Region is continuing to see a steady flow of bicycle donations. A potential next phase of the program could be to tie it with the Large Item Collection service, to identify bicycles for pick-up and have the collection contractor pick-up the bicycles at these locations to avoid residents having to drop them off at the Drop-off Depots.

Additionally, increasing the amount of social media posts that are displayed for the program, and highlighting the Recycle your Bicycle message. This could also tie in with seasonal times throughout the year, including March Break where residents can receive a repaired bicycle that is dismantled and ready to board the plane to take with them to a deserving family down south, or during the spring as residents are starting to do their spring cleaning.

**Replication**

This public information campaign involved a multi-tiered approach to promotion in that Niagara Region used several different methods in order to communication the message of ‘Recycle your Bicycle’. This is important as not all people receive their information the same way, and will ensure that your message is spread out across different audiences for a greater reach.

In terms of the program itself, it is fairly simple and involves very little resources. In this case, Niagara Region was already setting these bicycles aside, and it was a matter of finding a dedicated program volunteer to teach the skills to the students and an individual at the school to champion the program. The good hearted nature of the program, in giving back to the community to those in need is easy for everyone to get on board with and it really makes for a win-win situation for all involved.