

The role of community-engaged university scholarship in building resilience: Facilitating the emergence of local knowledge and innovation

Connie Nelson, Mirella Stroink

Panel Title: Lifelong learning for Community Resilience: Three initiatives from Thunder Bay, Canada

Panel Chair: Mirella Stroink

This presentation explores how an innovative approach to community-engaged scholarship is strengthening community resilience by building partnerships between university and community. This approach to community-engaged scholarship seeks to build resilience by addressing local community concerns and creating spaces for participants to develop strategies for action around local food systems. Based on a complexity-inspired model, these partnerships facilitate the emergence of new knowledge in the transformative process of retooling the production, processing, marketing and distribution of food to a locally based system.

This process of co-creation of knowledge fosters in students a connection with community and a capacity to innovate. By championing the triad of community, university and students, community knowledge can become a 'living library' of knowledge. The progression in developing a new local food system is driven by the core principles of the Contextual Fluidity partnership model - fostering vision, building webs of networks, employing strange attractors, and being context-based and fluid. These five principles are described with case examples of their application.

This co-created knowledge sustains a resilient local food system rooted in the unique social-ecological place of Northwestern Ontario that is inclusive of its cultural and geographic diversity - from farmers to processors and from forest foods and gardening to distribution, marketing and preparation. Through this process new culture-level patterns of people's goals, values, beliefs and behaviours can emerge that shed mechanistic and linear cognitive models and open up community level resilient ways of being.