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SEPTEMBER 13, 2016 | 184-16

## Laurier research photography exhibitions explore themes of recovery and resilience in wake of natural disasters

BRANTFORD – Describing what’s its like to live through a natural disaster and its aftermath defies language. Two upcoming photography exhibitions employ images rather than words to convey the experiences of citizens who lived through the devastating Goderich tornado of 2011, and flooding in the community of Wawa that washed out the Trans-Canada Highway in 2012. The collections, which will be displayed Sept. 17 in Wawa and Sept. 29 in Goderich, are part of a Wilfrid Laurier University research project titled, *Ontario Rural Municipal Emergency Management and Critical Infrastructure: Enhancing Planning and Preparedness Capacities for Climate Change Resilience*.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) funded the three-year study that was led by [Professor Brenda Murphy](#) and PhD candidate Bryce Gunson, who conduct research on climate change and resiliency in rural spaces. The study aims at enhancing the adaptive capacities of rural Ontario communities to growing climate change threats from extreme events by integrating emergency management with critical infrastructure planning. Information from this study will help form the *Toolkit for Rural Emergency Management Enhancement* (xTREME), which will be available to all Ontario rural communities.

“Rural communities are especially prone to extreme weather events,” said Murphy. “Given the uncertainties in a changing climate, this project works to integrate emergency management and critical infrastructure planning in novel and innovative ways to help rural communities be better prepared for future extreme events.”

In May 2016, Kylie Hissa and Samantha Russo, master’s students taking part in the project, engaged the communities of Goderich and Wawa through a technique known as photovoice. Hissa and Russo put cameras in the hands of citizens, and each was asked to take about 25 photos. The photos which participants felt best told the story of recovery and resilience have been selected for the public showings.

Receptions are planned in Wawa and Goderich where Murphy and Gunson will share the results of their study. The photovoice collections will also be on display. The Wawa reception takes place on Saturday, Sept. 17 from 9-4 p.m. at the Michipicoten Memorial Community Centre, 3 Chris Simon Drive, as part of the blueberry fall festival. The Goderich event is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 29 at 7 p.m. at Elizabeth’s Art Gallery, located at 54 Court House Square.

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