

# Erin Brockovich kicks off Seneca College's Sustainability Speaker series

By Julia Galt

Famed legal clerk and activist Erin Brockovich spoke to over 700 staff and students of Seneca College over livestream April 22, kicking off Seneca Business Sustainability Speaker Series.

A household name thanks to the eponymous 2000 Oscar-winning movie that followed her role in the Pacific Gas and Electric Company lawsuit, Brockovich today works as a consultant, environmental activist, and highly sought-after public speaker.

Over the course of her talk, Brockovich spoke about the importance of speaking up against unjust business practices, recounting her own experience fighting against PG&E for their role in Hinkley, California's carcinogenic groundwater contamination.

While filing documents as a legal clerk for lawyer Edward L. Masry in 1993, Brockovich's suspicions were raised by the inclusion of medical records in a real estate case involving PG&E. Investigating further, she uncovered a rash of illnesses in the desert town of Hinkley, all linked to high levels of hexavalent chromium in the town's drinking water. When it was determined that the pollution was linked to the illegal dumping of tainted water by a Hinkley PG&E compressor station, more than 600 residents hired Masry's law firm, Masry & Vititoe, to represent them. Brockovich was instrumental in uncovering evidence that proved PG&E had both known and tried to cover up the contamination.

The case was settled for \$333 million in 1996, the largest class action lawsuit settlement in U.S. history. Brockovich, then a struggling single mother, received a settlement of \$2 million.

Brockovich also spoke to Seneca's staff and students about her then-undiagnosed dyslexia, and how things

that seem like weaknesses at first can later become strengths. Because of her dyslexia, which causes her to "think backwards," Brockovich was able to immediately "go back in time" and understand that Hinkley's chromium contamination levels must have been 58 parts per million in 1958 if they were 5 ppm in 1991—a "game-changer." Earlier in life, however, her dyslexia had nearly prevented her from graduating high school.

Acknowledging that the word "green" means different things to different people, Brockovich urged listeners to rise up, get their voices heard, and fight against "antiquated" ideas in business. It's possible for corporations to care for the environment and still profit, she argued.

Brockovich also stressed the importance of the "5 Ls"—logic, leverage, loyalty, love, and leadership, and RAM (Realize your strengths, Assess yourself, and find your Motivation) when navigating the world as an activist.

"Stick-to-itiveness" was the word of the hour, with Brockovich reminding listeners that it doesn't take education or money to develop the revolutionary qualities of determination and grit.

"I promise you this: there's no obstacle you cannot surmount. There is no challenge you cannot meet. And there is no fear you cannot overcome, no matter how impossible it may seem," said Brockovich in conclusion. "None of us are alone. We are a team, and together we can save our planet and, in turn, save ourselves."

Seneca Business Sustainability Speaker Series is an ongoing program that will provide staff and students the opportunity to learn why sustainability in business matters. Guest speakers known for their sustainability advocacy will be addressing Seneca's community over the coming months.



Erin Brockovich

# Arts Society King calling for volunteers to fill positions

Arts Society King's MOSAiC magazine editor, Lidia Alghoul, is retiring after three years of creative and dynamic direction. MOSAiC is an arts-based quarterly publication featuring artists and artisans, photography, literature, heritage, nature and science, culture and community groups and events.

ASK is looking for someone who can volunteer approximately 25 hours per issue (four issues per year) from initial planning of content, editorial meetings (currently via Zoom), liaison with writers, artists, and the publishers. Skills include editing, formatting, uploading content and final proofing. The successful candidate will have the benefit of an established editorial team, the ASK board members and volunteers, as well as London Publishing.

Please apply by contacting Michele McNally at [info@artsocietyking.ca](mailto:info@artsocietyking.ca) and to be provided with a full list of Editor responsibilities. Deadline for submissions May 14.

The position of Treasurer is also coming available toward the end of this year. An early application would be appreciated by anyone with a bookkeeping or accounting background and entails about 3 hours per week.

If you would like to volunteer for King's premiere arts organization, we would love to hear from you!

Arts Society King always welcomes anyone with a love of the arts who would like to volunteer in any capacity. Whether it is welcoming visitors to the Schomberg Street Gallery or sharing ideas for a new event we would love to hear from you. Please email [info@artsocietyking.ca](mailto:info@artsocietyking.ca)



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## Support for Families: COVID-19 Child Benefit

**Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit**

\$400/child age 0 to Grade 12  
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 with special needs

Starting on April 26th, the Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit will provide financial support to families with young learners to help with additional costs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you missed applying for the Support for Learners program, you will have the opportunity to apply. Applications will open from May 3, 2021 to May 17, 2021.

To apply and additional information visit:  
[www.ontario.ca/page/get-ontario-covid-19-child-benefit](http://www.ontario.ca/page/get-ontario-covid-19-child-benefit)