

Kel Smith

Guelph, Ontario

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Professional Summary

Community organiser, land-based practitioner, and writer exploring ecological belonging and post-capitalist community building. I bring over a decade of experience developing community-rooted programs, participatory structures, volunteer networks, and cultural narratives that support resilience and shared stewardship. My work blends organisational leadership at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre with editorial and writing practice through *Novitas*, where I explore ecological imagination, care economies, and alternatives to extractive systems. I draw on a background in user-centred design, communications, and cooperative development to support communities in transition.

Work Experience

Ignatius Jesuit Centre - Communications & Community Manager (March 2025-Present)

Land-based community engagement, ecological programming, organisational transition

- Lead the development of new community-rooted models as IJC transitions from retreat-based operations to land-based programming focused on agroecology, ecological restoration, conservation, and public community use.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy, including participatory structures, advisory groups, volunteer programs, partner networks, and monthly community gatherings.
- Support stewardship 600 acres of ecological and agricultural programming by coordinating volunteers, partners, staff, and community members through shared stewardship frameworks.
- Facilitate organisational culture change toward collaboration, reciprocity, and relational leadership.
- Shape communication narratives that help the broader community navigate ecological transition and reimagine belonging to place.

Novitas - Editor & Writer (2022-Present)

Post-capitalist imagination, ecological storytelling, cultural criticism

- Writer and primary editor of *Novitas*, a project exploring community, ecological thought, care economies, and alternatives to capitalism.
- Develop long-form essays on slow work, ecological belonging, collective care, and relational culture.
- Build narratives that help readers recognise shared struggles under global capitalism and imagine grounded, relational alternatives.

Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition - Communications (2024-2025, Contract)

- Support storytelling across neighbourhood groups; rebuild organisational website; coordinate communications strategy grounded in community-led practice.

The Sustainability Project - Communications (2023-2024)

- Supported climate- and community-focused initiatives through digital storytelling, strategy development, and public engagement.

Eat Local Grey Bruce - Interim Executive Director & Board Chair (2022-2024)

Cooperative economics, community food systems, crisis leadership

- Led a community fundraising effort that raised \$150,000 to prevent insolvency of a regional food co-op.
- Guided organisational restructuring, governance renewal, and the hiring of a new General Manager.
- Supported cooperative systems that strengthen local food economies and producer livelihoods.

Pre Sixties Vintage Auto Supply - Co-Owner (2019-Present)

- Manage all digital infrastructure, communications, and branding for a small family business.

- Maintain e-commerce operations and customer communications.

Oaktree Media - Owner (2000-2023)

- Provided digital storytelling, web development, and communications strategy for nonprofits, community groups, and small businesses.

Community Leadership & Volunteer Work

- **Music Lives Association** - Digital strategy, platform management, community engagement (2011-2019, 2024-2025)
- **Two Rivers Learning Commons** - Founder; created alternative education space for youth (2018-2019)
- **Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation** - Communications (2019-2020)
- **Guelph Resilience Festival** - Coordinator; led multi-partner community resilience festival (2014-2016)
- **Transition Guelph - Board Chair** - Supported local resilience initiatives, food systems education, and community-based climate action (2014-2018)

Education

Master of Fine Arts, Interactive Design

Savannah College of Art and Design (2010–2015; *thesis incomplete*)

Bachelor of Arts, Sociology & Philosophy

University of Guelph (2000–2004)

Website Design & Development Certificate

Humber College (2004)