

Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee *2023 Annual Report*

*By Brad Harasymchuk, ESAC Chair
(2022/2023)*

Purpose of ESAC

The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) is dedicated to providing evidence-based advice with regard to environmental sustainability policies and practices that foster a sustainable future and lead to health and economic benefits for the University community. The ESAC will act to promote dialogue and discussion on issues related to the environment and sustainability. The ESAC is also committed to fostering environmental literacy, sustainable development, and environmental responsibility at Thompson Rivers University that can serve as a model for others. See the ESAC [Terms of Reference](#) for more information.

Responsibilities of ESAC

1. To advise the Board of Governors and Senate regarding the development, operation, and continuous evaluation of sustainability-related policy at TRU, including the current TRU Strategic Sustainability Plan.
2. To investigate environmental sustainability-related issues of concern at TRU and make recommendations to Administration, the Board of Governors and Senate within their respective areas of responsibility.
3. To communicate and collaborate with the Office of Sustainability on environmental sustainability issues.
4. In consultation with the Mission Fulfilment Executive Subcommittee, advise Senate and report on mission fulfillment in relation to the core theme of environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Thompson Rivers University's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee had another great year in fulfilling its purpose locally, nationally and globally. In the last academic year, ESAC has worked closely with the TRU Sustainability Office to champion sustainability. ESAC's membership is made up of a highly engaged group of students, faculty, staff and administrators who are dedicated to sustainability and are active participants in six subcommittees (Core Theme Planning, Zero-Waste, Sustainability Education in the Curriculum, Awards, Sustainable Purchasing and Biodiversity) which plan and execute many of the environmental sustainability related activities and events at TRU and in the community.

A quick overview of this work included:

- TRU maintained its Platinum Stars rating (STARS = Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) through the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)
- Continued implementation of Bird Strike protective window coverings on CAC and OM
- Development of INDG 2100: Local Indigenous Approaches to Sustainability course
- Creation of the terms of reference for the Biodiversity Subcommittee
- Facilitation of sustainability events included mulching of trees around campus, and continuation of the Solar Table Competition
- Coordination and creation of the inaugural SDGs & Global Super Snacks event at TRU IDays
- Currently updating the TRU Environmental Sustainability Policy
- TRU was recognized with a 2022 Fill it Forward Changemaker Award for its ongoing commitment to student engagement and education and has achieved over 27,000 reuses to date
- The 26th Annual Trash Bash Campus Clean-up and BBQ saw record registrations with 25 teams and 156 individuals registered to participate. A total of 230 lbs. of garbage and 150 lbs. of recycling, for a total of 380 lbs. of litter was removed from campus grounds.
- Conducted several workshops for various TRU offices/departments that either focused on sustainable purchasing principles or that had them mentioned as part of regular purchasing practices.

ESAC Membership 2022/2023:

Brad Harasymchuk – Chair, Faculty, EDSW
Tina Matthew – Vice Chair, Executive Director, Office of Indigenous Education
James Gordon – Manager of Sustainability Programs
Robyn Hollas – Director of Ancillary Service
Warren Asuchak – Director of Facilities
Scott Blackford – General Counsel
Christine Adam – Deans Council Rep
Dipesh Prima – Appointed by the Board
Lilian Kwan – Appointed by the Board
Elder, Mike Arnouse – Appointed by the Board
Meng Sun – Faculty, SOBE
Catherine Tatarniuk – Faculty, Science
Kai Bauman – Faculty, Bob Gaglardi School of Business and Economics
John Church – Faculty, Science
Shelley Church – Staff, Curriculum Governance Officer
Sarah Martin – Staff, OSEM
Tarneet Kaur – TRUSU Rep
Yash Kaushik – TRUSU Rep
Alana Hoare – Accreditation Liaison Officer
Lora Sartori – ESAC Support and Admin
Vacant – JOHSC Committee Rep

Reports of Subcommittees

Core Theme Planning Subcommittee:

Mission Fulfilment

The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee is one of the Senate Mission Fulfilment Committees responsible for reporting on institutional effectiveness based on key performance indicators and measures of success.

Core Theme Planning Subcommittee

Report of the Sustainability Core Theme Subcommittee. Prepared by Alana Hoare, Outgoing Chair, Assistant Teaching Professor, School of Education

Terms of Reference

The Sustainability Core Theme Subcommittee is responsible for:

- advising on the alignment of sustainability with TRU's vision and sustainability values;
- reviewing Sustainability indicators and recommending appropriate measures/tools based on available data;
- reviewing mission fulfilment threshold ranges and five-year targets, and recommending revisions as appropriate;
- in collaboration with the Chair of ESAC and Associate Vice President Campus Infrastructure, Sustainability, and Ancillary Services, preparing the annual core theme workbook.

Summary of Activities: September 2022 – August 2023

During the 2022-23 academic year, the Sustainability Core Theme Subcommittee met once a month to review the success of the core theme indicators, discuss the relevance of existing indicators, propose actions to improve the indicator results, and generate new indicators of growing importance.

During our review, we noticed that an emphasis had been placed on TRU's built environment. However, committee members expressed a desire to be more intentional about tracking institutional efforts to embed sustainability in the curriculum. Potential emerging measures were proposed, including:

- Curriculum: course content related to environmental sustainability;
- Research: student participation in sustainability research;
- Knowledge mobilization (i.e., how is sustainability research shared with the broader community?); and,
- Students entering sustainability-related fields after graduation.

Additionally, we agreed that the indicator related to Sustainability Purchasing Workshops had successfully prompted TRU to reach the goal of delivering workshops to all departments. Now, we are interested in revising the indicator to track the measurable effects of these workshops, for example, tracking the percentage of sustainable purchases made and setting baseline and five-year targets. Actions that may support achieving this goal include:

- Continue building a “Preferred Vendors” list based on the vendor’s sustainability practices;
- Working on zero waste projects;
- Building surveys into the competitive bid process to track vendor commitment to sustainability;
- Providing sustainability procurement workshops and presentations for faculty and staff; and,
- Request for Purchase (“RFP”, larger purchases): include a section on sustainability that will include a minimum of 10% for sustainability. The goal is to make this the minimum for all competitive bids. Currently the industry standard is 100% price based, which means proving sustainability in an RFP does not exist.

Conversations regarding the relevance and introduction of new indicators is ongoing. The committee agreed to maintain the status quo this year. A draft of the Core Theme Workbook is underdevelopment and will be submitted to TRU’s governing bodies later this year, as part of the requirements for Mission Fulfilment planning and evaluation.

More information regarding Mission Fulfilment and the Core Theme Sustainability is available online: <https://www.tru.ca/about/tru-mission-statement/themes/sustainability.html>

Zero Waste Subcommittee

The Zero Waste Subcommittee provides oversight for implementation of TRU’s Zero Waste Plan, ensuring timely progress is made on established targets. The group is responsible for identifying gaps in performance and identifying/researching additional resources that may be required to adjust course in meeting those targets. Report submitted by Anna Rogers, Chair of the Zero Waste Subcommittee.

Responsibilities

1. The Zero Waste Subcommittee reports to ESAC and updates ESAC on its core activities, including any significant decisions or resource requests.
2. The Zero Waste Subcommittee provides TRU members with tools, expertise and guidance required to facilitate decision making related to waste management. This includes removing barriers to and creating incentives for waste minimization, reuse, and diversion.
3. In addition to overseeing implementation of TRU’s Zero Waste Plan, the committee will strive to align efforts and recommendations with the goals and objectives outlined in:
 - [TRU’s Campus Strategic Sustainability Plan](#)
 - [AASHE’s Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System \(STARS\)](#), particularly by taking proactive steps to achieve the maximum scoring possible for credits related to:
 - Waste Minimization and Diversion
 - Construction and Demolition Waste Diversion
 - Hazardous Waste Management
 - [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), particularly:
 - SDG #3: Good Health and Wellbeing
 - SDG #11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
 - SDG #12: Responsible Consumption and Production
 - SDG #14: Life Below Water
 - SDG #15: Life on Land

- [STARS Aligned](#): Using the Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System to Report on Contributions to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

During the 2022-23 academic year, the Zero Waste Subcommittee met once a month to review progress on TRU's five-year Zero Waste Plan which the committee prepared and launched last year.

A few highlights from the committee's activities over the past academic year include:

- Growing the committee to 22 members strong with representation from 17 stakeholder groups identified as critical to achieving TRU's waste reduction and diversion goals as well as refreshing the committee's outdated Terms of Reference.
- Recruiting 12 Student Sustainability Ambassadors to promote the Fill it Forward (FIF) program which inspires campus members to reduce single-use waste through reuse while supporting global giving projects and measuring cumulative environmental impact of day-to-day actions.
 - TRU was recognized with a 2022 Fill it Forward Changemaker Award for its ongoing commitment to student engagement and education and has achieved over 27,000 reuses to date!
- Expanded organics collection program to the East Village Residence.
- Embedded presentations into staff and student orientation sessions that promote TRU's zero-waste goals including tips/incentives for reducing waste on campus and how to properly sort waste at the zero waste stations on campus.
- The 26th Annual Trash Bash Campus Clean-up and BBQ saw record registrations with 25 teams and 156 individuals registered to participate. A total of 230 lbs. of garbage and 150 lbs. of recycling, for a total of 380 lbs. of litter was removed from campus grounds.
- Ran a new and very successful pilot program within McGill, East Village and North Tower residences aimed at reducing waste going to landfill as part of April move-out. Bins were provided for students to put their leftover cleaning products, non-perishable food items, clothing, and other usable miscellaneous goods with all materials then being donated to local community organizations.
- Introduced a new part-time position split between Sustainability and Facilities to further support waste diversion efforts.
- Completed the competitive bid process for a waste consultant. Awarded to Waste Management on July 19, 2023 which has already resulted in increased efficiencies related to flow of materials, less garbage and recycling on the ground and better processes for obtaining weights of materials.

Sustainability Education in the Curriculum Steering Subcommittee

The Sustainability Education in the Curriculum Steering Subcommittee (SECCS) reports to the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) and is committed to providing TRU faculty and programs with evidence-based curriculum and teaching practices to foster sustainability-related content, processes, and practices within courses and programs. Please see the subcommittee's [Terms of Reference](#). Highlights submitted by Carolyn Ives, Co-Chair of the Sustainability Education in the Curriculum Steering Subcommittee.

Highlights from 2022-23 include the following:

- SECSS saw the culmination of several years of work as the course they created, INDG 2100: Local Indigenous Approaches to Sustainability, was taken on by the Faculty of Arts and guided through the curricular approval process. While the development took several years, it was important to the subcommittee to do this work in a good way;
- The subcommittee members and other faculty and staff have taken inspiration from SECSS member Laura Grizzlypaws's curriculum for faculty and staff, such as the experiential Learning from the Land retreat, as well as her weekly workshop series. These learning opportunities have inspired sustainability action and innovation across campus;
- SECSS member Paul Clark has initiated a faculty and staff sustainability community of practice. CELT is supporting this initiative.

Awards Subcommittee

The Awards Subcommittee is responsible for advertising, selecting recipients and disbursing funds for sustainability-related awards including the Tom Owen Award and the Environmental Sustainability Achievement Awards, open to faculty, staff and students. Embedded are the [terms of reference](#).

This year's award recipients are:

- Environmental Sustainability Achievement Staff Award – Shannon Mazereeuw
- Environmental Sustainability Achievement Student Award – Saaransh Bhardwaj
- Environmental Sustainability Achievement Student Award – Sofia Rueda
- Tom Owen Student Award – Jessica Merrikin



Sofia Rueda, winner of the Environmental Sustainability Achievement Student Award

We have a new award that we will be adjudicating next year called the Herbinlay Happy Planet Award.

Sustainable Purchasing Subcommittee

This subcommittee is in its third year and is dedicated to ensuring sustainable purchasing practices. A [sustainable purchasing guide](#) was created for staff and faculty to consider sustainability in their procurement decisions. Sustainable procurement looks at three key areas of environmental, ethical and social implications. The following [purchasing fact sheets](#) have been created to help staff and faculty in making more sustainable purchases. Highlights submitted by James Gordon, Chair of Sustainable Purchasing Subcommittee.

Some highlights from this year included:

- In the process of doing a significant overhaul of the current TRU Purchasing Policy so that it will have a significant component dedicated to the principles of sustainable purchasing. A consultant has been hired with expertise in this area and is working with the TRU Procurement Department to finalize the policy;

- Conducting research that is looking into what other public service organizations are doing in the realm of using an EDI purchasing framework (equity, diversity, inclusion).
- Conducted several workshops for various TRU offices/departments that either focused on sustainable purchasing principles or that had them mentioned as part of regular purchasing practices;
- Worked on updating the 10 high impact purchasing opportunity (HIPO) worksheets to make them more relevant with the key offices and departments around the campus that they most pertain to;
- Started the process to organize a campuswide large free garage sale in April or May in order to facilitate the transfer of TRU property from those that are not using it to those that could use it;
- Posted on various sustainable purchasing 'success stories' on social media channels in order to promote these favourable practices.

Biodiversity Subcommittee

This subcommittee is in its second year and is dedicated to preserving and increasing biodiversity on campus. Highlights submitted by James Gordon, Co-chair of the Biodiversity Subcommittee.

A few highlights from the subcommittee include:

- creation of the terms of reference (which will go to the ESAC in October for approval);
- recruiting new members; preliminary planning for the subcommittee's first major initiative, which is a combination of compiling data and reports on audits of biodiversity components around the campus (for instance, inventory of trees and report on bird population);
- discussion about the possibility of running some sort of program involving the app iNaturalist.



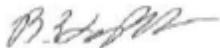
Building on from the 102 trees that were planted last year, this year mulch was added by volunteers

Looking Ahead

ESAC will continue to support TRU's effort to be a leader in environmental sustainability. Moving forward ESAC will:

1. Maintain the high standards included within the STARS reporting system to maintain TRU's Platinum rating.
2. Maintain the focus towards achievement of the six priorities set out in the 2020-2025 TRU Campus Strategic Sustainability Plan:
 - a. Plan for carbon neutral and net zero campus carbon emissions
 - b. Eliminate single-use plastics and other single-use items
 - c. Integrate sustainable purchasing throughout campus operations
 - d. Conserve potable water
 - e. Advance sustainability performance of the campus built environment
 - f. Champion sustainability beyond campus for a global impact
3. In addition to these priorities, over the next year ESAC will also strive to:
 - a. Promote the Sustainability's office's Staff and Student Ambassador programs
 - b. Support faculty in developing courses with an environmental sustainability focus
 - c. Develop EDI focused sustainable purchasing practices across campus
 - d. Increase biodiversity on campus

ESAC will continue to work closely with the Sustainability Office to further TRU's Strategic Goal of Sustainability and strive for 100% Mission Fulfillment, guided by TRU's Vision Statement and Campus Strategic Sustainability Plan, which aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The global climate challenges are real and change needs to happen and I am certain TRU, with the assistance of ESAC, is up to the challenge.



Brad Harasymchuk

Chair, Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee 2022/2023