



Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee

2024 Annual Report

For the period January 1 to December 31, 2024

Written by Shelley Church, Catherine Tatarniuk (ESAC co-Chairs), and

James Gordon (TRU Manager of Sustainability Programs)



Purpose of the 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 policies and plans at TRU, including the current [TRU Environmental Sustainability Policy](#) and the [TRU Campus Strategic Sustainability Plan, 2020-2025 \(CSSP\)](#).
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 Fulfillment 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 and assist with the work of the office, either with advice or getting involved in initiatives. ESAC's membership is made up of a highly engaged group of students, faculty, staff, Board-appointed members, 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 (a seventh subcommittee, Energy, will be launched in the Spring of 2025). Members of each subcommittee, which consist of members of ESAC and the broader TRU community, plan and execute many of the environmental sustainability related activities and events at TRU, and even help with some in the broader community. This report is a summary of the activities of ESAC and each of the six subcommittees.

An overview of this work in 2024 included:

- Successfully updating and then getting approval by the TRU Board of Governors for the amended [TRU Environmental Sustainability Policy](#).
- In April 2024, TRU's sustainable management team received the Gold award for

Leadership Excellence by Managerial Staff from Colleges and Institutes Canada.

- In June 2024, TRU was awarded the Public Sector Award, Excellence and Leadership in Environmental Stewardship, by the Recycling Council of BC.
- Led by TRU's Energy Manager, Natalie Yao, TRU achieved compliance with the ISO 50001 international standard for energy management.
- On August 29 TRU took a significant step forward in its journey to achieve zero carbon emissions from its buildings with a ground-breaking ceremony for its Low-Carbon District Energy System (LCDES). This innovative project, a collaboration between TRU, Creative Energy and BC Hydro, will help make TRU one of the first universities in North America to reach zero carbon in its building stock, underscoring its commitment to sustainability and climate action.
- In October TRU was among the first in BC to receive approval from BC Hydro to install more than 1,000 solar panels across campus over the next five years (and was awarded \$300,000 from BC Hydro). The first phase of the TRU Solarization PV Project involves the installation of 540 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on three campus buildings in Kamloops: CAC, A&E, and ITTC. The solar energy generated will help power the new Low-Carbon District Energy System, which will allow TRU to reach its goal to reach zero carbon by 2030.
- Continued installation of bird strike protective window covering around campus on 'hot spot' windows (that birds are likely to strike); in 2024 Clock Tower and HOL were finished, and work began on A&E. CAC and OLARA are done.
- Second year of the successful event *SDGs & Global Super Snacks*, part of TRU's involvement in the pan-Canadian event for universities and colleges, *SDG Week Canada*; to bring awareness to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- The 27th Annual Trash Bash campus clean-up and BBQ was another success; included cleaning up the land bordering Summit Drive for the first time. 80 participants removed 140 kg of garbage and 119 kg of recycling.
- Of the 12 indicators in the Mission Fulfilment workbook for the TRU value of Sustainability, 7 of the 12 were either 'Achieved' or 'Minimally Achieved'. (Details of this are in the report, *TRU Mission Fulfilment Planning and Evaluation – Sustainability – 2023-2024*, that was submitted to the Provost in June 2024.
- Consultant hired to help re-write TRU Purchasing Policy, which, amongst other elements, will now have a greater emphasis on sustainable purchasing principles.
- Passed a motion to create an ESAC working group to investigate the creation of an official park on the Kamloops campus.
- A full complement of Sustainability Research Grants was awarded; two for Faculty members, each at \$5000, and four for students, each at \$2500.
- Four sustainability projects around campus were awarded funds from the TRU Sustainability Grant Fund.
- Solar Table Design Competition; student Nolan Goller won the competition for project number three (situated behind A&E)
- EV Van Conversion project moved ahead but stalled in June and is on hold until July 2025 when a team member will return
- ESAC participated in a TRU initiative to encourage students to co-chair committees. Brad and student Poonam Poonam co-chaired the

subcommittees section of the ESAC agenda.

- Films For Change showed the movie Push on May 29.
- TRU partnered with a local organizer to host the first annual bicycling event *Stoke The Season* (April 27). It was a free and family-friendly event open to the public and took place on the campus.

ESAC Membership Roster as of January 2025:

- Shelley Church and Catherine Tatarniuk – Co-Chairs (Staff, Office of Mission Fulfillment and Quality Assurance, and Faculty, Science)
- Ted Gottfriedson– (designate for) Executive Director, Office of Indigenous Education
- James Gordon – Manager of Sustainability Programs
- Robyn Hollas – Director of Ancillary Services
- Warren Asuchak – Director of Facilities
- Hardeep Chahal – General Counsel
- Baldev Pooni - Deans Council Rep
- Peter Arkesteyn, Faculty, Trades and Technology – Appointed by the Board
- Niki Remesz – Appointed by the Board
- Elder, Mike Arnouse – Appointed by the Board
- Heather Simeney Macleod – Faculty, Arts
- Kai Bauman – Faculty, Bob Gaglardi School of Business and Economics
- John Church – Faculty, Science
- Amie Schellenberg – Faculty, Trades and Technology
- Sesathya Mahahama Nanayakkara – TRUSU Rep
- Poonam Poonam – TRUSU Rep
- Vacant – JOHSC Committee Rep
- Vacant – Staff position
- Vacant – (non-voting) Accreditation Liaison Officer
- Lora Sartori – (non-voting) ESAC Support and Admin

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.

The Core Theme planning subcommittee in 2024 was made up of the Chair of ESAC, Brad Harasymchuk, and the Manager of Sustainability Programs for the Sustainability Office, James Gordon. Due to the fact that the entire Mission Fulfilment mandate of TRU

was in a period of flux during much of 2024, it was agreed that the minimum should be reported on and focus on reporting on the key indicators of the core theme as was done the previous. The details of these indicators were submitted in the report TRU Mission Fulfilment Planning and Evaluation – Sustainability – 2023-2024. This report was submitted to the Provost in June 2024. Of the 12 indicators in the Mission Fulfilment Workbook for the value of Sustainability, 7 of the 12 either met the thresholds of ‘Achieved ‘or ‘Minimally Achieved’.

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:

In light, the fact that the Core Theme planning activities for the entire institution were in a state of flux for much of 2024, it was decided by Brad and James to reproduce what was done the previous year and use the same 12 sustainability indicators. They met on a regular basis throughout the first half of the year, leading up to the submission to the Provost of the Core Theme Planning workbook in June. Once school resumed in September, James, along with the two new Co-Chairs of ESAC, Shelley Church and Catherine Tatarniuk, attended monthly meetings with the Mission Fulfilment Executive team in order to discuss how Core Theme reporting will happen in the future. Those meetings are ongoing and a plan is currently being developed by that team for the future of Core Theme reporting.

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.

Responsibilities

- The Zero Waste Subcommittee reports to ESAC and updates ESAC on its core activities, including any significant decisions or resource requests.

- 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.
- 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

Summary of Activities:

- 98% mattress recycling record in campus residences.
- Diverted 9500 kg of furniture.
- Introduced Planet Earth for book recycling. Diverted 1000 kg of books over the summer.
- Fall Trash Bash in October in conjunction with TRUSU.
- BOMA Best certification - Waste audits for seven campus buildings this year.
- Presenting to various classes about zero-waste.
- Initiated a program to dispose of low-value office supplies as freebies.
- Sustainability Office worked with Aramark to purchase reusable small containers for takeout.
- Reusable Catering Program launched – Catering deliveries on campus outside of the CAC using almost all reusable items; for under 10 people for an additional fee of \$0.50/person

[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](#). Unfortunately, due

to the fact that there was no Chair for this subcommittee for most of 2024, it went on hiatus starting in March 2024. In December 2024 and January 2025 meetings took place with interested members of the TRU community and a new format for this committee is being developed.

Awards Subcommittee

The Awards Subcommittee is responsible for advertising, selecting recipients and disbursing funds for sustainability-related awards including the Tom Owen Award, the Environmental Sustainability Achievement Awards (open to faculty, staff and students), and new in 2024, the Herbinlay Happy Planet Award. Embedded are the [terms of reference](#).

This year's award recipients were:

- Environmental Sustainability Achievement Staff/Faculty Award – Crystal Huscroft
- Environmental Sustainability Achievement Student Award – Heidi Wismath
- Environmental Sustainability Achievement Student Award – Parth Bavishi
- Tom Owen Student Award – Tatiana Mueller
- Herbinlay Happy Planet Award – Dani Lafleur

Sustainable Purchasing Subcommittee

This subcommittee is in its fourth year and is dedicated to ensuring sustainable purchasing practices. During the course of 2024 three key members of the TRU Procurement Department left TRU for various reasons; two of them were core members of this subcommittee. As a result of this, the activities of the subcommittee were significantly stalled. As a result of the new members of that department getting up to speed with the initiatives of the subcommittee in the later few months of 2024, the work at hand will continue with the start of 2025.

The main work of the subcommittee in 2025 is working with members of the department to try and make sure sustainability-focused concerns are well articulated in the new TRU Purchasing Policy. Sustainable procurement looks at three key areas of environmental, ethical and social implications. The following documents will be used to help inform elements of the new policy:

- A [sustainable purchasing guide](#) was created in 2018 for staff and faculty to consider sustainability in their procurement decisions (revised in 2021).
- The following ten [purchasing fact sheets](#) were also created to help staff and faculty in making more sustainable purchases.

Highlights submitted by James Gordon, Chair of Sustainable Purchasing Subcommittee:

- The TRU Procurement Department is 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) and an indigenous purchasing framework.
- Conducted one workshop for a TRU office that focused on sustainable purchasing principles
- 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 the spring 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 third year and is dedicated to preserving and/or increasing biodiversity on campus.

A few highlights from the subcommittee include:

- Helped with running the first BioBlitz event at TRU, which involved using the app iNaturalist. It's an initiative to increase awareness of biodiversity on the TRU Kamloops campus. Students won small prizes for finding different plants and animals, registering them in the app and completing corresponding bingo cards - September 2024
- Continued work on 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)
- Continued advocacy for installation of bird strike protective window covering around campus on 'hot spot' windows (that birds are likely to strike); in 2024 Clock Tower and HOL were finished, and work began on A&E. CAC and OLARA are done.
- Tree planting on September 18 marked the third anniversary of the TRU Campus Tree Program, which works to involve members of the TRU community to volunteer in meeting the goals of the program—plant, care, and

preserve trees on the TRU campus

- TRU awarded a [Bee Campus designation](#) by Bee City Canada.
- Assisted with annual Earth Day event (April 22), *TRU Plants For Earth Day*, that gave out the following for free to any TRU member: planter pots, earth, vegetable/flower seeds, and expert advice on how to grow them.

Looking Ahead to 2025

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

Moving forward ESAC will:

1. Support the Sustainability Office staff with two major initiatives that will affect all of TRU for years to come:
 - The next 5-year Campus Strategic Sustainability Plan (2026-2030)
 - The next AASHE STARS report (submitting in Spring/Summer 2026.)
2. Maintain the focus towards achievement of the six priorities set out in the 2020-2025 TRU Campus Strategic Sustainability Plan:
 - Plan for carbon neutral and net zero campus carbon emissions
 - Eliminate single-use plastics and other single-use items
 - Integrate sustainable purchasing throughout campus operations
 - Conserve potable water
 - Advance sustainability performance of the campus built environment
 - Champion sustainability beyond campus for a global impact
3. In addition to these priorities, over the next year ESAC will also strive to:
 - Promote the Sustainability's office's Staff and Student Ambassador programs
 - Support faculty in developing courses with an environmental sustainability focus
 - Develop EDI and Indigenous focused sustainable purchasing practices across campus
 - Maintain and/or increase biodiversity on campus