

2024
2025

ANNUAL REPORT



THOMPSON
RIVERS
UNIVERSITY

Student
Services

The staff, faculty and students who work within Student Services acknowledge the territory stewarded by the Tk'émłúps te Secwépemc and T'élxelcémc, within the unceded territory of Secwepemcúl'ecw. As such, in our work we strive to support students to meet the same goals of studious reflection (étsxem) that has been supported by the Secwépemc since time immemorial. We acknowledge that the Secwépemc stewarded Secwepemcúl'ecw by ensuring those who guested on the land passed through richer in knowledge having traversed through this territory, and welcoming the teaching brought forth from their guests. This includes those who came from the surrounding Nations of the Syilx, St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Tšilqot'in, Dakelh, and Nuxalk.





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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Annual Report provides a general overview of the various achievements and challenges of the Student Services department between May 1, 2024, and June 15, 2025. This report is available in print and on the Student Services website.

FROM THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, STUDENTS

Sara Wolfe

What a year it has been. Contributing to the annual report every summer always provides an opportunity to look back AND look forward, which lends well to personal reflections and big picture planning. And, while I appreciate how a quiet campus over the summer allows us to re-group and rest, seeing the campus in full swing is always a thrill. The excitement of Orientation and Welcoming Events, TRUSU's Back to School BBQ, and the start of fall classes are infectious. When moving from meeting to meeting on campus, I'm conscious of the many wide-eyed newcomers and excited returning students and recognize how Student Services works to help them feel at home at TRU.

Behind the scenes, there were many student-centered initiatives in the works.

- Revamp of Academic Advising
Moving towards a hub-and-spoke, holistic advising approach.
- Possible Integration of the Assessment/Testing Centres/Services
Developing a comprehensive draft plan that brings services into a unified model.
- Student Services Alignments
Continuing to consider aligning services with the student life cycle and on-campus spaces.
- TRUly Flexible Delivery
Exploring how TRU's move toward flexible delivery might impact student services.

The Presidential Search was also underway in the Fall of 2024. Staff were encouraged to attend the formal consultations to ensure that Student Services was a priority and that students were always at the center.

As we moved through the seasons, there was (and still is) so much uncertainty around us. Globally, we have seen many systems being changed and altered by the Trump administration. Nationally, we were headed towards an election and new leadership for our country. Provincially, we are watching folks adjust and plan around the US tariff discussions.

Here at TRU, we experienced:

- A drop in international enrolment numbers that impacted the budget;
- Space changes with the move of Open Learning, the Finance Office, and more;
- New plans were being made to implement TRU Flex, TRU Bold, and the Strategic; Internationalization Plan (SIP);
- Welcoming a new President and Interim Provost;
- The integration of the OL Student Engagement and Experience team into Student Services;
- The Faculty of Student Development moving to form a new faculty along with Honours College.

In the face of all this upheaval, conversations often touched on the idea of change and new beginnings. The leadership team and I often spoke about how we navigated change: some were excited, cautious, uncomfortable, resistant, fearful, and/or a mix of all. As we navigated these challenges and concerns together, it was of the utmost importance to be patient, open, and authentic, showing respect and value for each other's process, including yourself.

Remember that the changes we see are part of a collective vision; these changes are not personal but rather structural.

I wish I had the answers as to where TRU, Canada, and the world will be in five years, but no one has. The only certainty is change; perhaps the key to coping is adjusting, influencing and softening our reactions instead. I, too, am always working on myself and doing my best to work to move Student Services and, therefore, the student experience through all the changes in a good way. I hope to remain optimistic that these changes will make us even stronger as individuals, as a team, and as a support network for all TRU students.

As we look forward to 2025-2026, I think Student Services will be the same with some differences. I remember learning the phrase in 1991 while travelling through Thailand when I was 19 years old- "Same, Same but Different". Perhaps this will be an approach for this year. We will continue to see change, but Student Services Mission, Values and Guiding Principles will largely be the same. I am a positive person by nature, so when I see change, I see opportunities. As we move forward as a group of Student Affairs professionals who are deeply passionate about students and the work we do, I hope you too, can find some positivity and passion.

I hope you enjoy reading about the many adventures Student Services have had in 2024-2025 and learn a little along the way.



Student Recognition

2025 Neil Russell Student Leadership Award

Fourth-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) student **Tess Russell** won the 2025 Neil Russell Student Leadership Award for demonstrating exceptional leadership within the TRU School of Nursing, the broader campus and the health-care sector.

As a single mother balancing school, parenting, and volunteer work, Tess has shown exceptional dedication to mentorship, advocacy, and student support, establishing herself as a highly influential figure in nursing education.

Tess initiated the Nursing Peer Mentor program, coordinated a study night with 150+ attendees each semester, and organized a speaker series to help peers explore diverse nursing careers.

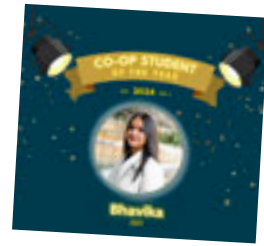
She also served as the official delegate for the Canadian Nursing Students' Association, secured funding for five peers to attend the CNSA National Conference, and contributed to the Nursing Curriculum Committee, and the Interior Health New Grad Committee.

Her community involvement included supporting stem cell swabbing events, the TRUSU Blood Club's partnership with Canadian Blood Services, and organizing a Teddy Bear Clinic to help children feel more at ease in medical settings. She also shared her story at the TRU EmpowerHER International Women's Day Celebration.



Given in recognition of Neil Russell, former TRU VP of Student Affairs and VP Academic, for his dedication to student achievement and leadership. This award honours TRU undergraduate students who have demonstrated leadership skills and made outstanding contributions to TRU, their communities, and society.

O&T Mentor wins Co-op Student of the Year award



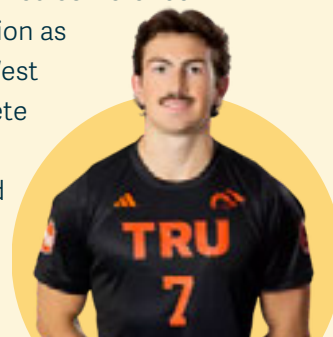
Even though Bachelor of Computing Science major **Bhavika Jain** was swamped during her final semester, she nominated herself for the esteemed award. "It's always better to take a chance than regret it later." Jain's impressive skills are rooted in her experiences as an international student and peer leader. "When I came to Canada in 2021, I was impressed by the diversity of cultures. I got to engage in unforgettable learning experiences. Peer mentorship is very dear to my heart."

PACE Leaders Celebrated

After an outstanding five seasons with the WolfPack men's basketball team, **Asher Mayan** was honoured by Canada West and named the Canada West Student-Athlete Community Service Award winner.



Matthew Hamilton, a graduating WolfPack men's volleyball team member, received conference-wide recognition as the Canada West Student-Athlete Community Service Award recipient.



TRU World Overall Excellence Award

Congratulations to **Preethal Rodrigues** and **Puneet Malik**, two graduating Student Services Peer Mentors who received this award in recognition of their contributions to the well-being of the student body while studying at TRU, maintaining good academic standing, and serving as representatives of their country.



Celebrating the Class of 2025

It was a Convocation Week to remember at TRU:

- Dozens of volunteers assisted with registration and credentialing, pinned gowns, seated and ushered attendees, while also providing emotional support.
- 10,000+ bobby pins to keep the caps securely on their heads.
- 1000's of excited and emotional instructors, mentors, friends, and family members cheering them on.



3
DAYS



7
CEREMONIES



1,600+
GRADUATES

Graduating Peer Leaders

PACE LEADERS

Olivier Jumeau
Caylah Lemon
Nya Derkach
Asher Mayan
Matthew Hamilton
Noah Wonnick
Kennedy Love



O&T MENTORS/AMBASSADORS

Nicolas Noreiga
Emily Fagg
Bhavika Jain

STUDENT STORYTELLERS

Puneet Malik
Preethal Rodrigues
Jenna Marshall

INDIGENOUS STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Ami Smith

SVPR AMBASSADORS

Jayden Scherbarth
Karlie Clarke



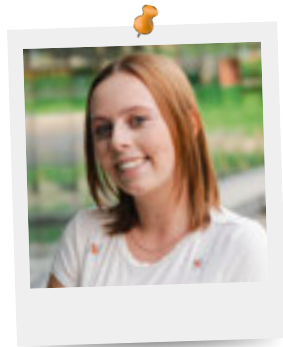
TRU PEER LEADER OF THE MONTH



Manuel Centeno (September)

Supplemental Learning Leader

Known for his positive energy and extraordinary work ethic, Manuel never says no to an opportunity to help. Despite a demanding timetable of courses, volunteer work, and other commitments, Manuel has been responsible for better managing the SL space and supplies. He often volunteers on Fridays at the community Homework Club and is always around to help the students attending his sessions.



Jenna Marshall (October)

Senior Student Storyteller

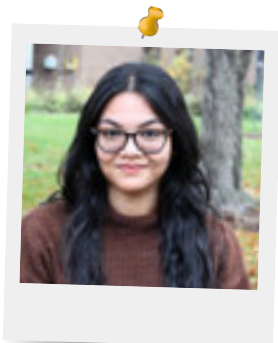
Dependable, strategic, and multi-talented producer of exceptional and meaningful digital content, Jenna's technical skills have grown significantly over the years. She generously shares information and insights to help others feel empowered. Above all, Jenna's approaches to leadership are particularly heartening. She supports junior students with project work, showing care and compassion, and engages in various on-campus events with intelligence, interest, and enthusiasm.



Doan Nguyen Phat (November)

Intercultural Ambassador

Having been a part of the Intercultural Ambassador team for two years, Phat has led several projects, including the name inclusion project, created marketing and communication assets for upcoming intercultural events, and hosted the first-ever Intercultural Teatime in House 4. Described as thoughtful, humble, empathetic, and passionate about advancing equity, inclusion and intercultural engagement, Phat has modelled personal growth, resilience and bravery and leads by example and with deep compassion.



Paromita Roy (December)

BBA Peer Mentor

Generating numerous creative ideas about future programming while assessing the team's successes and challenges to ensure continuous growth and improvement, Paromita is celebrated for her initiative, care, compassion, and logistical support. She often provides guidance or anticipates when shifts need to be covered, filling those gaps without being asked. As a peer leader, Paromita is an intuitive, supportive, reliable, and adaptable.



Bensly Roods Pierre (January)
Undergraduate Research Ambassador

Considered a superstar on campus, Bensly's creativity shines through the thoughtful ways he manages the student clubs, coursework, and paid positions. His ability to read the room and translate what he perceives through media is unique—if you can imagine it, he can make it! He's an amazing peer mentor, Research Coach, Research Assistant, and Student Caucus Member. You'd likely have seen him fist-bumping every other student as he walks down the hall, which is a testament to his keen community-building skills and ability to make people feel like they belong.



Pprianika Bokey (February)
Career Ambassador

Exemplifying passion, leadership, creativity, and excellence, she brings new ideas to the team, showcasing her creativity and commitment to enhancing the student experience. Notably, she took the lead in developing the first Career Ambassador podcast. Also, having experience as an Orientation & Transition Mentor and Student Storyteller makes her an invaluable resource for her peers and the broader TRU community.



Caylah Lemon (March)
PACE Leader

A leader in the classroom, on the field and in the community, Caylah, a TRU WolfPack women's soccer team member and a fourth-year psychology major, is enthusiastic, empathetic and creative. In her three years with PACE, she has developed new initiatives and ideas when brainstorming projects, presentations, and icebreaker activities. She is always willing to step in and offer help or stay behind after a meeting or PACE session to debrief and strategize. Set to graduate this spring with aspirations to attend grad school and become a counsellor, PACE will miss Caylah but is excited to see her future unfold!



Monty Armstrong (April)
Student Wellness Ambassador

Through responsiveness, advocacy, research, and content creation, they have made significant contributions to increasing student literacy about sexual health, queer wellness, and harm reduction. Monty goes above and beyond to help create a safe, inclusive, equitable, non-judgmental, and authentic environment for learning and connection at TRU.



Manuel, Phat, Paromita, Bensley and Caylah (left to right) received their certificates at the year-end peer mentorship luncheon.

Engagement & Experience

Student Life • Gender and Sexual Diversity
Multi-Faith Chaplaincy • Indigenous Student Services



Engagement & Experience service areas support students by fostering connection and belonging through inclusive opportunities for involvement, reflection, and community-building.

Orientation & Transitions Mentor Excellence

In addition to supporting new students, collaboration within the Orientation & Transitions Mentor and Ambassador team provides opportunities for peers to recognize strengths and areas of growth in one another and themselves. This is best exemplified through the 360-review process used at the end of the academic year, where in addition to feedback for the program and coordinator, each student reflects on their experiences and provides feedback to their peers.

For example, students are asked to identify each person's biggest strength.



She is exceptionally wonderful in doing presentations. I had the pleasure of sharing the floor with her and while she was nervous, she overcame her anxiety and delivered a captivating presentation.



She may seem quiet, but she has exceptional conversation skills. I can sit with her for quite some time and not worry about the awkward silence.

They also share what they feel would be the most profitable areas of growth for one another. This feedback is particularly valuable for students returning to their Mentor or Ambassador positions the following year, who often incorporate this feedback into their goals for the year.



At times his communication style can come across more direct than intended. Being more sensitive to how his words come across would be beneficial in building stronger connections.

Self-reflection is included, wherein students articulate their learning, reflect on growth, and celebrate accomplishments.



My biggest take away was my ability to effect tangible change with my mentees. During the semester I have seen mentees actively participating in campus activities such as student elections and the TRU radio.

Kayla Sanford (middle) took a quick photo break with her fabulous O&T team amid Orientation activities.



More than ever, I've been reflecting on the importance of ensuring students are at the heart of institutional initiatives, especially during times of change or uncertainty. In such a shifting educational landscape, providing a stable environment is key, but also I've realized how much working with students revitalizes and stabilizes me!

A group of student mentors frequently come into the Student Life office to study and eat, creating an infectious hum of activity in the space. Overhearing their conversations about what they are up to creates a nice reprieve in the day and reminds me of why I do what I do.

I am always in awe of students' perspectives, personal stories, and their involvement on campus. Our students are the soul of our campus. Witnessing their ever-growing passion, dedication, and drive as they move toward their next chapter is an honour.

We are truly fortunate to have such extraordinary individuals in our community.

— Julie Taylor



Engagement & Experience

Open Learning builds community through social engagement

While completing the OL Bachelor of General Studies program, **Maddy Toldeo** engaged in online workshops and events as a way to connect with her peers. "There are still ways to meet peers in person. One of my favourite experiences was attending the in-person OL student social last summer. I met fellow students, connected with TRU staff and felt welcomed and enjoyed great food."

She encourages her peers, especially first-year students, to pace themselves. "Take life one day at a



time. Don't be afraid to adjust your schedule or course load as you figure out what works for you. Stay flexible, be kind to yourself, and try to enjoy the process."

"I appreciate how TRU-OL makes an effort to engage us long-distance learners. I remember attending a few in-person events a few years ago where OL bought us a dinner, and we were able to network with other students. I made a few long-term friends at these events and learned a lot more about the school. Keep up the good work!"

'Alumnights' take place across the country

TRU Alumni Office travels around Canada connecting to TRU Alumni at networking events called Alumnights. In spring 2023 they began opening event registration to Open Learning current students. The Student Engagement team has had the pleasure of attending some events in Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto and Ottawa in order to connect with TRU-OL students and alumni.

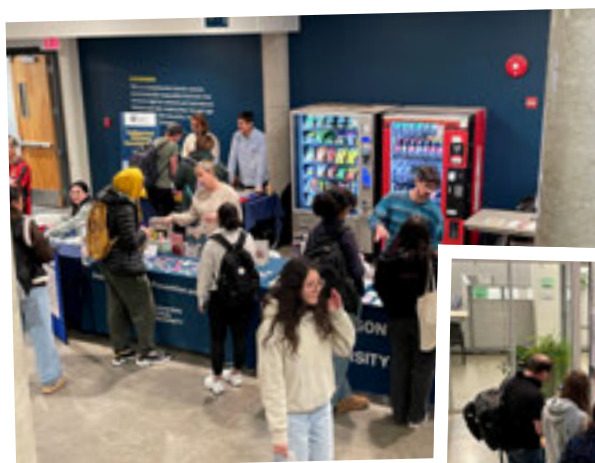


Peer Mentor Extravaganza 2025

The student leadership fair promoted a wide variety of opportunities to engage with 14 different campus groups.

Student Street buzzed with conversation about how being a peer mentor, leader, ambassador, tutor, academic coach, or storyteller can benefit student life.

The peer mentors reported that applicants were particularly interested in developing their skill set, receiving training, gaining experience, earning money, having fun, and making friends.



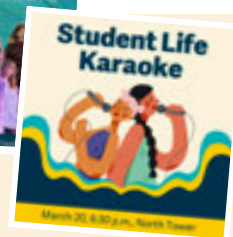
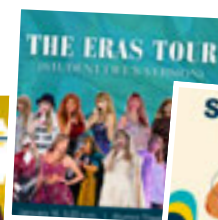
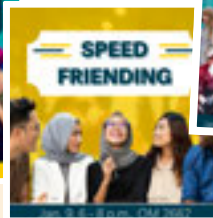
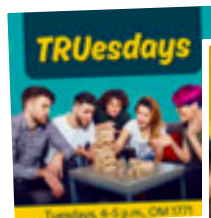
Finding your future in higher education

Tourism student **Puneet Malik** supported planning for orientation and transition events and programming as a Learning Strategist (co-op) with the Office of Student Life. Starting in the summer of 2024, he immersed himself in the eight-month term, gaining valuable insights and skills, noting that it's been a transformative experience.

One of the standout moments of Malik's co-op term was representing TRU Student Life at Convocation 2024. Working with Orientation & Transitions Learning Strategist Kayla Sanford and Student Life Manager Julie Taylor, Malik experienced firsthand the complexities and rewards of coordinating major university events.

Malik spent orientation week executing the Welcome Ceremony and TRU'sa Palooza, among other first-year festivities. "Kayla has been a huge supporter from day one. I look up to her for everything. She has been a strong pillar for me to learn and grow. I feel so much more confident in what I do in the office, and the credit goes to her because she saw my potential," he said.

"Planning such a monumental event can feel overwhelming because there are so many factors to consider," Sanford noted. "Orientation may take place in one day, but it takes months to plan! It was so fun to watch Puneet witness the results of his work as the elements came together."



TRUesdays: Make friends and participate in fun activities like bingo, air hockey, tote bag painting, and button making every Tuesday. Drop by and stay as long (or as little) as you'd like!

Speed Friending: Participants were randomly assigned to small groups for 5-10 minute intervals. Through conversation prompts, games, and curiosity, everyone interacted and asked questions before moving to a new group.

Student Life Karaoke: Whether you're a seasoned performer or only sing in the car, this is your chance to belt out your favorite tune. There were snacks and supplies for bracelet-making for those who preferred to listen.

The Era's Tour (Student Life Edition): For students in their movie era, Student Life offered a blank space for you at this free screening. Participants enjoyed activities, refreshments, and singing, and they accessed resources from Counselling and Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response.



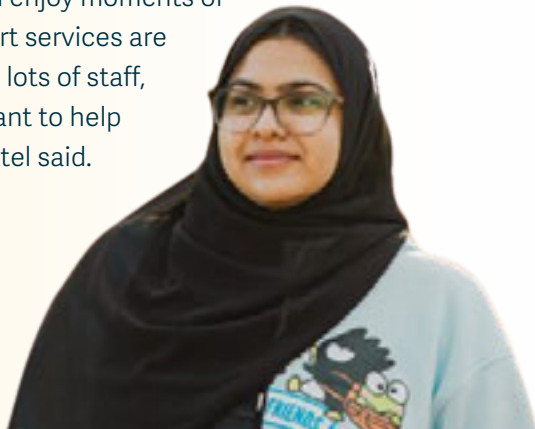
Having Puneet in the office as our co-op student was instrumental to the success of our programming this year. He brought a student voice into the work, ensuring we consistently met students where they were at in both communications and programming. Additionally, having him to help plan and facilitate events allowed us to deliver more consistent, impactful programming than I could have without him.

— Kayla Sanford

Engagement & Experience

Coping with Homesickness and Loneliness

After three years as an international student at TRU, **Waris Patel**, a second-year BSc biology student, reflects on the impact of homesickness and loneliness on mental health. In a blog, she shares the strategies she's curated with the help of Counselling Services, Supplemental Learning and the Medical Clinic to build a community and enjoy moments of solitude. "So many support services are available on campus, and lots of staff, faculty, and peers who want to help and see you succeed," Patel said.



Unveiling the Future: Reading (and Writing!) Tarot

Writer & Storyteller Alicia Ashcroft hosted a fun, interactive Creative Writing Friday takeover in the Writing Centre on Feb. 14. Through tarot card readings and prompts, participants reflected on and wrote about their past, present, and future. Tarot can also be used for journaling, manifestation, intention setting and fiction writing.

Student Storytellers exploring TRU services



In honour of **Indigenous Awareness Week**, Reese, Puneet, and Ppriyanka attended a powwow for the first time. "The 2025 Powwow was a spectacular celebration of Indigenous culture through dance, history, colour, and beauty that made for a truly magical evening."



The Student Storytellers popped by OM 1486 to check out the **SV Support Source**. Together, they decompressed, made some art, played with Lego and puzzles, shared some laughs, and accessed a support network in the SVPR office.



Deiveek and Ppriyanka attended **Job Fair 2025** in the Campus Activity Centre to find volunteer opportunities, part-time work, summer employment and full-time positions in the arts, business, education, health, journalism, science, social work, tourism, and trades.



Emma and Puneet had the BEST time at Sandman Centre on Family Day as part of a collaboration with TRU and Kamloops Blazers.

Intercultural Leadership Series 2024

Over the fall semester, 24 students explored how culture influences leadership styles and identified ways to develop the skillset of a culturally “competent” leader.

To enhance cultural awareness and understanding, students were first introduced to interculturalism concepts in relation to leadership. Following the foundational learning, participants further examined diverse cultural perspectives, cultural dimensions, frameworks, and worldviews.

The series also enhanced a student’s understanding of intercultural communication dynamics by discussing effective communication techniques to reduce cultural barriers and adjust to diverse groups. The group learned how to integrate equitable practices into their leadership styles to promote diverse ideas and how unconscious bias influences actions and decision-making.



Through facilitated dialogue, participants discussed cultural influences on conflict and learned to apply culturally sensitive approaches to conflict management, enabling them to develop an open mind when approaching intercultural interactions.

As part of the series wrap-up, the students created and documented intentional goals to implement equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations in their leadership style.

Nursing research project highlights the need for pride space

Noah Fischer supported a group of third year nursing students as they conducted an environmental scan to assess the existing services and resources for 2SLGBTQPIA+ students in comparison to other campuses across Canada.

Elijah Dio, Alexandra Smith, Upama Zaman, and Shreya Sharma regularly attended **Queer Connections** to promote the survey, which explored the 2SLGBTQPIA+ student experience in terms of perceived comfort, safety, space and a sense of belonging at TRU. The results indicated a need for a dedicated pride space and more mental and sexual health resources in Moodle.

The students then hosted a World Café at the end of the semester, allowing them to interact with various 2SLGBTQPIA+ topics and share personal insights and experiences.

For Sharma, the project exposed numerous obstacles and challenges that the 2SLGBTQPIA+ community faces. "These barriers may not be blatant or apparent unless you are the individual experiencing them. However, we would not be as

keenly aware of this need unless we talked about it. It is only by engaging with this community and fostering conversations that we can create an inclusive, safer, and positive campus experience for them."

As a field guide, Noah was very supportive and engaging, resulting in a very positive experience for us. Projects like these should be encouraged at TRU to help students become involved with and raise awareness about the diverse communities that exist here."



Pride first-timer floats through parade with chosen family

Reese Dolphy experienced the 2024 Pride Parade, his first ever, as a spectator; this year, he wanted to march. Instead of walking, he waved his art from a float. “I was so grateful to be part of it. I was sometimes self-conscious, as authenticity is something I continue to work on every day. Yet, I felt so much love from everyone around me, especially my best friend, Karthika Sunil, who stood with me on the float and said that she would be my family. Having Noah Fischer and Alicia Ashcroft there also felt like having my family with me. I’m so happy I got to share it with both of them this year and last.”

Fischer, the Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSD) Manager in Student Services, engages in resource development, support work, programming, events and workshop facilitation for TRU’s 2SLGBTQPIA+ population. Ashcroft is the Writer & Storyteller and oversees Dolphy’s work as a Student Storyteller.

For his work with TRU Student Life, the visual arts student celebrates the efforts to increase visibility and advocacy for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community on campus. “It makes such a difference to share our stories.”

“Reese is an amazing human being, said Fischer, “He’s become an integral part of the GSD fabric. He is bubbly, supportive, warm, and truly lights up any room he enters. I look forward to continuing to have him attend, support, and further our programming and events. I’m so happy that we all share this lovely connection.”



Dolphy’s first point of contact with Student Services was through Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response. The team was engaging in on-campus outreach and was more than happy to answer his questions. They recommended that he connect with Fischer about the barriers he was facing in accessing gender affirming care.

“When I first came to Canada, I didn’t know about the 3-month wait period before your medical service plan (MSP) activates,” Dolphy shared. “I was afraid that I’d have to be off hormones for that long or have to pay the exorbitant cost out of pocket.”

A delay in or inconsistent use of hormones can be physically, psychologically and developmentally harmful to a trans human’s transitional experience, so Dolphy needed to stay on track with his regimen.

Fischer looped in the Office of Student Affairs, and Holly Winzey submitted a request for emergency funding. He was able to connect to TRU’s Medical Clinic (every appointment would cost him \$50 since GuardMe insurance doesn’t cover it).

“Having that first interaction with Noah was like a weight being lifted. He was so proactive and compassionate that the process immediately felt more manageable. I realized that I wasn’t alone with my hormone transition journey.”

Through active listening, resource sharing, and community building, Fischer not only helped Dolphy in one particular moment, but he also helped him develop a support network.



Queer Connections has been and continues to be something I look forward to every semester. Thanks to Noah, it’s a space that feels safe and welcoming. He’s such a giving person, and I’m grateful that he was there during that difficult transition period. He continues to support me wholeheartedly.

— Reese Dolphy

Reese, a first-year student pursuing the Visual Arts Undergraduate diploma, identifies as a BIPOC trans man and is proud to be part of the 2SLGBTQPIA+ community

First-ever Drag Show celebrates self-love

In February 2025, Gender & Sexual Diversity, TRU Student Life and TRU Research collaborated with Whalemade Productions to bring the first free, on-campus drag show to TRU. Drag performers Frieda Whales, Sophonda, Wanda Lust and Syren's Call took over Student Street at the TRUly, Madly, Deeply drag double feature, drawing a crowd of 70+ students and community members. "By celebrating the art of drag, honouring love in all its forms, encouraging self-love and bringing the community together, the event fostered a palpable energy of love, admiration, encouragement, and queer joy", Fischer said.

"It was an absolute joy to facilitate; and with such positive feedback from the attendees and volunteers alike, it's become solidified as an ongoing offering that will become apart of GSD's departmental fabric."

One month later, GSD had the honour of supporting IDays in their annual International Fashion Show, which involved a dazzling performance by none other than Canada's Drag Race Season 1 winner Priyanka! With a photoshoot, captivating show, and memories to last a lifetime, this was sure to be a night to remember.



Tanya LeClair, Alicia Ashcroft, Priyanka, Noah Fisher and Casey Hopper (left to right) enjoyed a memorable evening at I-Days.

Teaching Indigenous ways of being and learning in the classroom

Indigenous Student Services Manager **Marie Sandy** has been integrating cultural values into pedagogical experiences within the Social Work, Visual Arts, Human Service, Trades, and Master of Education programs. Sandy, along with Denise Dunstan, visited classrooms to facilitate 30-minute introductions to the spiritual, cultural, academic and emotional supports available at Cplúl'kw'ten (House 5). They also attended Transitions Day to welcome first-year students.

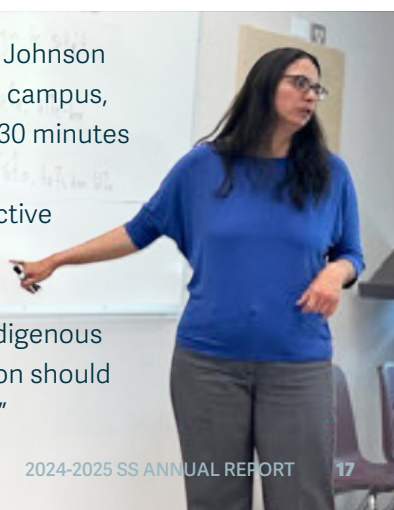
"These presentations highlight our availability to Indigenous students and the broader population," Sandy said. "You can ask questions and be curious."

Sandy has also been teaching the Secwépemc language in associate professor Shelly Johnson's class. "Marie did a lovely job," Johnson said. "She's very kind, provides clear direction and has such a nice manner about her. She uses

humour, which the students genuinely appreciated. They said, 'If you offer this again, please bring Marie back!'"

Classes took place out on the land, exploring "everything available near campus - food, medicines, and technologies," Sandy said. They also engaged with physical projects at both the Makerspace location and House 5.

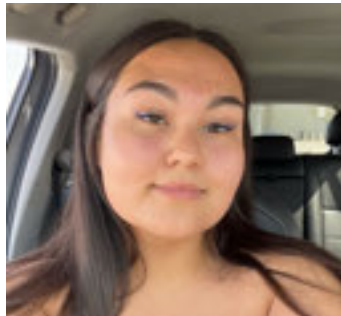
When researching for this course, Johnson interviewed Indigenous people on campus, and beginner Secwepemctsin for 30 minutes before each class was a recurring recommendation. "There's a collective responsibility to engage with 94 Calls to Action and not place it exclusively on the shoulders of Indigenous educators. Truth and Reconciliation should be enacted across the institution."



Engagement & Experience

Feeling at home at House 5

As **Cambria McGregor** prepares to be an Indigenous Student Mentor in 2025/26, she plans to draw from her own experiences to encourage her peers to proceed at their own pace.



Before declaring a chemistry major, the fourth-year Bachelor of Science student took three courses per semester to get a feel for student life. "I didn't have a lot of faith in myself during my first and second years. High school was easy for me. I never had to study; I just did my homework and got good grades. The transition to university was tough. But I've learned that failure and setbacks aren't the end of the world."

Part of coping with the stressors of academics is community, and McGregor hopes that first-year students will "find the courage to come by Cplúl'kw'ten, because I know I certainly didn't at first. I hid in my dorm room and went to my classes. University's serious, but it's also meant to be social and fun; you should enjoy your time at TRU."

As luck would have it, McGregor had a connection with Marie Sandy, Manager of Indigenous Student Services, as they are both from Williams Lake.

"Being a fellow T'xelc community member, I was so happy to hear that Cambria was coming to TRU," Sandy said. "I was so mystified that I hadn't seen her during her first year that I eventually went to her dorm room to check in. She visited Cplúl'kw'ten the very next day."

"Marie has always been a major supporter," McGregor said. "House 5 is such a welcoming place. You always feel at home. It's just been an overall great experience."

Now that she's found her place at TRU, McGregor said, "I'm glad that I still have a couple of years of school left, because I'll know to cherish it more. I can't wait to work in a space where everyone can study and relax. When I first heard about peer mentorship, I thought, 'Sign me up. I'm so in.'"

Another one of McGregor's favourite on-campus pals is peer mentor Virginia Fiesta. "She's so bubbly and welcoming. She's one of the reasons I'm always sticking around House 5. I also love the Elders. Doe Thomas always has a story to tell. I love talking to her."

She also refers to Elder Shane Rollins, a former faculty member who volunteers at Cplúl'kw'ten on Wednesdays. "He's an absolute gem. He's always there to help and is happy to answer questions. I used to hesitate to reach out, but now I would tell first-year students: You're not being a burden. Just keep asking questions. They don't mind."

"Cambria has since become such an integral member of Cplúl'kw'ten," Sandy said. "We are looking forward to her mentoring new TRU Indigenous students." "I'm looking forward to my classes and catching up with everyone at House 5," McGregor said. "It's going to be a good year. I can feel it in my bones."

Indigenous Peer Mentor celebrated for contributions



Lex Edwards, Ts'kw'aylaxw Indigenous Mentor and Communications Coordinator highlighted, **Robert Edward**, as being a dedicated mentor for the past couple of years. "During his time at TRU, he has made significant contributions to the Indigenous student community. He served as president of the TRUSU Drum Club, where he demonstrated leadership and a strong commitment to preserving Indigenous cultural traditions. Additionally, Robert was a WorkStudy student for the Office of Indigenous Education and ISS, playing an instrumental role in planning and executing the TRU Powwow, as well as numerous other events on campus that supported Indigenous student engagement." Edward will be completing his final year as a mentor before graduating in 2026.

Wellness Circle collaboration identifies need for ongoing MMIWG programming

Natural Resource Science student **Payton Maffioli** began attending the Indigenous Wellness Circle in winter 2025. “It always felt like a welcome space to check in, be vulnerable, and share different points of view. We just created an amazing little community at the Gathering Place. I wish I had started going earlier.”

Maffioli, who attends regular counselling sessions, appreciates hearing a professional point of view one-on-one, but “being in a group circle helps you refocus, reframe, visualize, ground, and think critically. You grow in confidence because you have these constructive friendships cheering you on. You become yourself again.”

To establish group trust, Brassard and Berardi would use visualization techniques to get in a good headspace to share, listen, and learn. “It’s a safe space. What happens in Wellness Circle stays in Wellness Circle,” Maffioli said.

Counsellor and circle facilitator Andrea Brassard said, “Payton showed up in a very engaged and available way. She was vulnerable, present and considerate of herself and others.”

On the fifteenth anniversary of National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people, also known as Red Dress Day, Brassard and TRU Counselling co-facilitated a support circle with Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response. Maffioli’s attention to the need and request initiated ongoing programming.

“We felt like we were able to contribute to our Indigenous community in a significant way. Payton was courageous for recognizing the need to create space for ongoing support and offering to help.”

Maffioli, who will be an Indigenous Student Mentor in 25/26, said, “MMIWG is still very stigmatized in our society, and it’s not discussed enough. There are so many people in pain needing to talk and access support.”

“It’s not a once-a-year kind of loss; it’s interwoven into our daily lives,” Brassard said. “We are not only navigating it, feeling it, processing, or healing from these devastating losses, but we’re also living in fear in an unsafe world. We’re not capable of holding that enormity and acknowledging that in one day, so having something community-oriented to hold us together is important.”

“It makes me emotional to even think about it and how the news and media outlets portray MMIWG, which is the targeted predation on Indigenous women, on women like me, on women who have experienced the pain of being preyed upon, who have experienced the pain of generational trauma, of poverty, who haven’t had the privilege of knowing what it feels to be safe. There’s no time for us to breathe.” Maffioli said.

“We need to make our voices heard. We need people to know that MMIWG crosses our minds every day. It’s a thought that will never go away. The tears that we cry for our lost sisters will never stop pouring down our faces. It needs to be talked about. We want the right to be safe.”

Being vigilant is exhausting. I want to put that brain power toward creativity, being part of a community, using our full potential, getting a good sleep at night, and being able to eat a meal in peace without being harassed. There’s so much more that we could be doing than living in fear.”

“Creating spaces and raising our voices in the most selfless way you can do for others.”



Weekly group sessions in Cplú'kw'ten focused on interoception, self-awareness and group wisdom.

Intergenerational learning on ancestral land

As part of a recent team-building exercise with staff from Indigenous Student Services and Indigenous Education, **Denise Dunstan**, Nlaka'pamux Learning Strategist for Indigenous Transitions, and her mother, Elder Trudine, along with her daughter, Ts'setkwu Dunstan, facilitated a tour of Cache Creek, where Trudie grew up.

It was a very nice day of picking asparagus at Basque Ranch. Mom told us some stories about her childhood. We usually go every year, so while it's not new to me, seeing it through someone else's eyes was amazing. We do everything as a family.

— Denise Dunstan

Having lived in Secwepemcúl'ecw for most of her life, Dunstan says that home is where my mother is from. "When I'm on that territory, when I'm outside and with my feet on the ground and the wind on my face, I feel deeply rooted and connected to Mother Earth."

Elder **Trudine Dunstan** joined the Elder in the House program in September 2024. "Which is amazing because she's had an amazing career. Education is everything to our family. Knowledge and wisdom are passed down through the matriarchal lineage to the next generation and the generations to come. We're thinking about generations that aren't even here yet," Dunstan said. "I'm the second generation to be educated in post-secondary. Education and social work have become family traditions."

Denise received her social work degree from TRU in 2010 and her Master of Education from UBC in 2022. Denise and her cousin, Noni, completed their master's together, starting in January 2020, unaware of the pandemic and devastating wildfires that would soon impact their future circumstances. "She's the reason why I did my master's; she gave me this wonderful, kind nudge that I needed, but it took an entire village to get me to the finish line."

Elder Trudine, great-grandmother, grandmother, mother, and auntie, refers to her ancestors as her original teachers. She worked with Indigenous youth throughout her career, including students from kindergarten to post-secondary education.



She also completed her Master of Education in Leadership and Administration at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. During that program, Elder Trudine travelled to New Zealand with her cohort to attend a course at the University of Waikato on Māori people's ways of knowing and being. Since retiring, she has been teaching the Nlaka'pamux language through the Mentor-Apprentice program and Reclaiming My Language: A Course for Silent Speakers.

"She'd had an incredible career. Spending time with my mom once a week has been a special experience. Her presence as an Elder has been a full-circle moment."

The academic journey is an extended obstacle course of internal and external variables. Denise's understanding of the gamut of student life is evident in her supportive approach. "I tell students that it's okay to cry; that they're in a safe space; and I listen, offer help, provide resources, reframe a situation, give them a nudge, explain that it's just might not be their time, that taking a break is not a failure, that they'll come back when they're ready. "I'm the mom of this house, and I walk alongside students until they're able to fly."

While Dunstan imparts the wisdom of her lived experiences and ancestral connections, she believes that student engagement is a reciprocal relationship. "I learn from them as much as they learn from me."

Spirituality on your own terms: reimagining spiritual care

Jane Gingrich, having recently transitioned from being a Pastor and Multi-Faith Chaplain to become the Spiritual Health Practitioner at Royal Inland Hospital, reflects on her time as a faith leader on campus and in community.



I'll miss working with students. Spiritual care can help individuals discover their own sense of personhood as they transition to and through a university experience, which is significant.

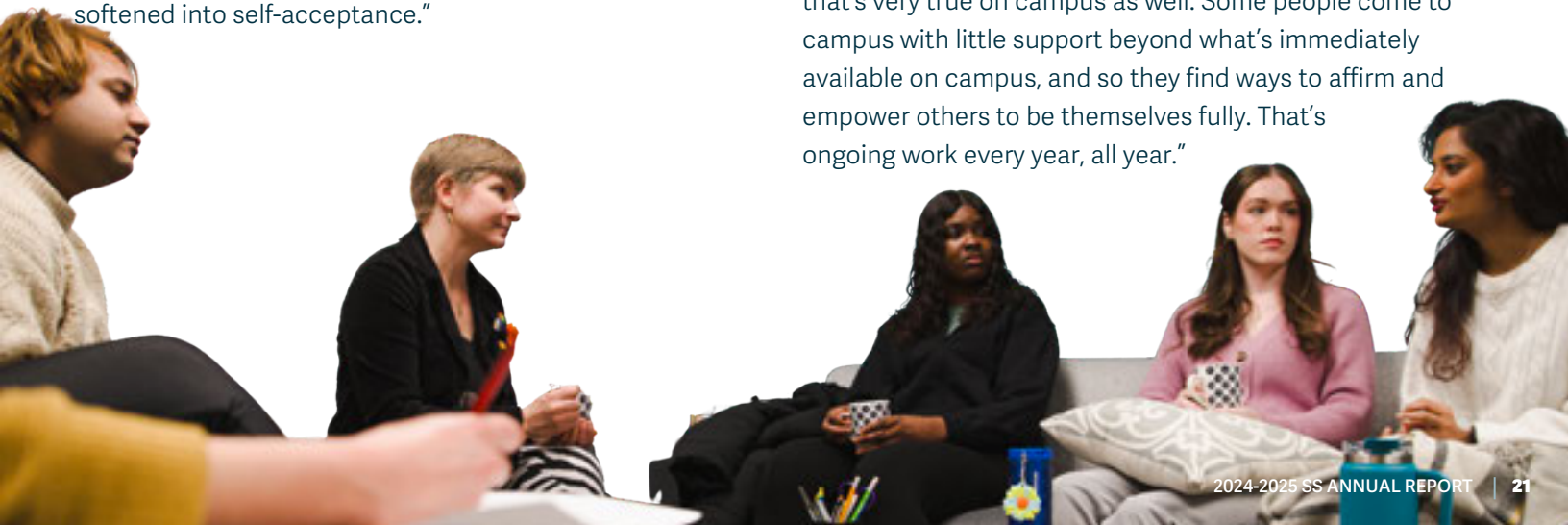
She spent her last academic year at TRU facilitating grief support groups, and the irony isn't lost on her that she's experiencing similarly complex emotions about this significant life change. "The person I replaced wasn't supposed to retire for a few more years; however, when the position became available, I was urged by many to apply for it. But accepting the role meant letting it all go. "I thought I had more time at TRU."

Within her grief work, Gingrich provides encouragement and counsel that helps someone see themselves, their relationships, and their circumstances differently, which might cause a ripple effect of positive change and peacemaking. Even if someone doesn't commit to significant changes or decisions, she remarks that those micro cues—such as shoulders dropping and breathing slowing, which indicate feeling calmer and more grounded—might lead to a stronger appetite or sounder sleep. "I am in awe of people on a regular basis. I'm watching them change right in front of me. Perhaps they were being harsh to themselves, but by the end of the conversation, they had softened into self-acceptance."

Gingrich believes you don't have to subscribe to a particular faith system; you can embrace spirituality on your own terms, all of which can reduce burnout and bolster coping strategies. Spirituality can be misunderstood as being rooted in religion, which can cause resistance. So, there's this interesting dynamic at play that we often see on campus."

She noted that those perceptions on spirituality and religions were factored into Multi-Faith Chaplaincy promotions through Communications, Storytelling and Events. "What I so greatly appreciate in particular is (Writer & Storyteller) Alicia Ashcroft's ability to emphasize the breadth of what spiritual care is and how it's part of making sense of the world around us. It's about figuring out how to navigate what's going on based on what that compass is inside of us. And it might be religious or not, but it is how we make meaning and how we understand ourselves and others."

When grief, fear, or dread narrows someone's worldview, Gingrich strives to expand their outlook. "Acknowledging the response to a particular experience is important, but you don't want to give false hope or default to a 'things are going to get better' type sentiment. Still, it is recognizing that there's still hope in various ways, and there are still means of connection. This affirmation is crucial because it reassures us that we're not alone. I invite people to identify their support systems and to consider whether they may have family, friends, or even a network within the broader community. I think sometimes people don't have a lot of support beyond what is immediately present to them, and that's very true on campus as well. Some people come to campus with little support beyond what's immediately available on campus, and so they find ways to affirm and empower others to be themselves fully. That's ongoing work every year, all year."



Engagement & Experience

Human to human, soul to soul: the pathway to spiritual freedom

On the other side of her first year at TRU, Eckankar Cleric **Sandra Tait** is steeped in gratitude to be part of the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy. "I like the work. Sharing the tenets of Eckankar can help students improve their circumstances and strengthen their connections."

An active student of Eckankar since the late 1980s, Tait completed the required 22 years of spiritual training and was ordained in 2012. As a member of the clergy, she upholds the high spiritual standards of the sacred path of Eckankar, serving with love, compassion, and grace.

"The soul is in charge of everything, but our mind has a way of taking over, which throws us off balance," Tait said. "Eckankar centers on balance, connection, joy, spirit and acts of service. It shows you the way, providing messages to guide you in listening to your heart and intuition. And the more people that find the light, the more good things happen, the better things happen in the world."

Mastering the art of detachment is one of the many outcomes of Eckankar. "Acceptance is a state of consciousness and every moment is an opportunity to be present and spread as much joy as you can. Allowing life to happen. Trusting that everything is in order," Tait said.

Eckankar is also about paying attention, actively listening and being present. "It's important to be there in each moment. Not wondering about what's going to happen later, all that matters is the present moment and recognizing that every moment is a new opportunity to heighten the positive vibrations of the world around you. It's as simple as opening the door for somebody or helping somebody get through the day. It's nothing extraordinary, it's leading an ordinary life, but with love."

To Tait, gratitude is a cornerstone of her contemplations. "I try to give myself as much love as I want to give out to others. Connecting human to human, soul to soul, gives me hope - the hope to go on, hope for the future."



You don't have to join Eckankar, and we're not trying to recruit anyone; we're all part of spirit, you just need to tune in. When you ask, seek, and look for answers, that's when things happen and change for you. You'll learn about yourself and discover what comes next. Eckankar is about knowing yourself; it's about self-realization and staying open. You get sent dreams; you get shown things. You're taking responsibility for things in your life, and you're cultivating self-love. It's a journey into yourself.

One of this year's TRU highlights for Tait "was a joyful moment at the end of the semester. I was in the office, and four students came by, asking to use the microwave. I welcomed them in, and while their food was heating up, they asked about the chaplaincy space. We had a great chat, and I wound up teaching them the HU. I was so happy, it was a lovely, synchronistic experience."

Tait introduced the TRU community to Eckankar on March 25, aiming to help students, staff, and faculty discover their spiritual purpose by raising their Spiritual IQs in the Wellness and Inclusion Room. Campus outreach with Gawa Ling Khandro and Narayan Mitra was another highlight of the year. "We had the big spin the wheel at the chaplain's table. About 100 students came by, enthusiastically snapping up everything from the table. It was a good day. Hopefully, they'll take advantage of the chaplaincy in the fall. Whatever they need, whatever service they require, whether it's just a kind word or a listening ear, we'll be there."

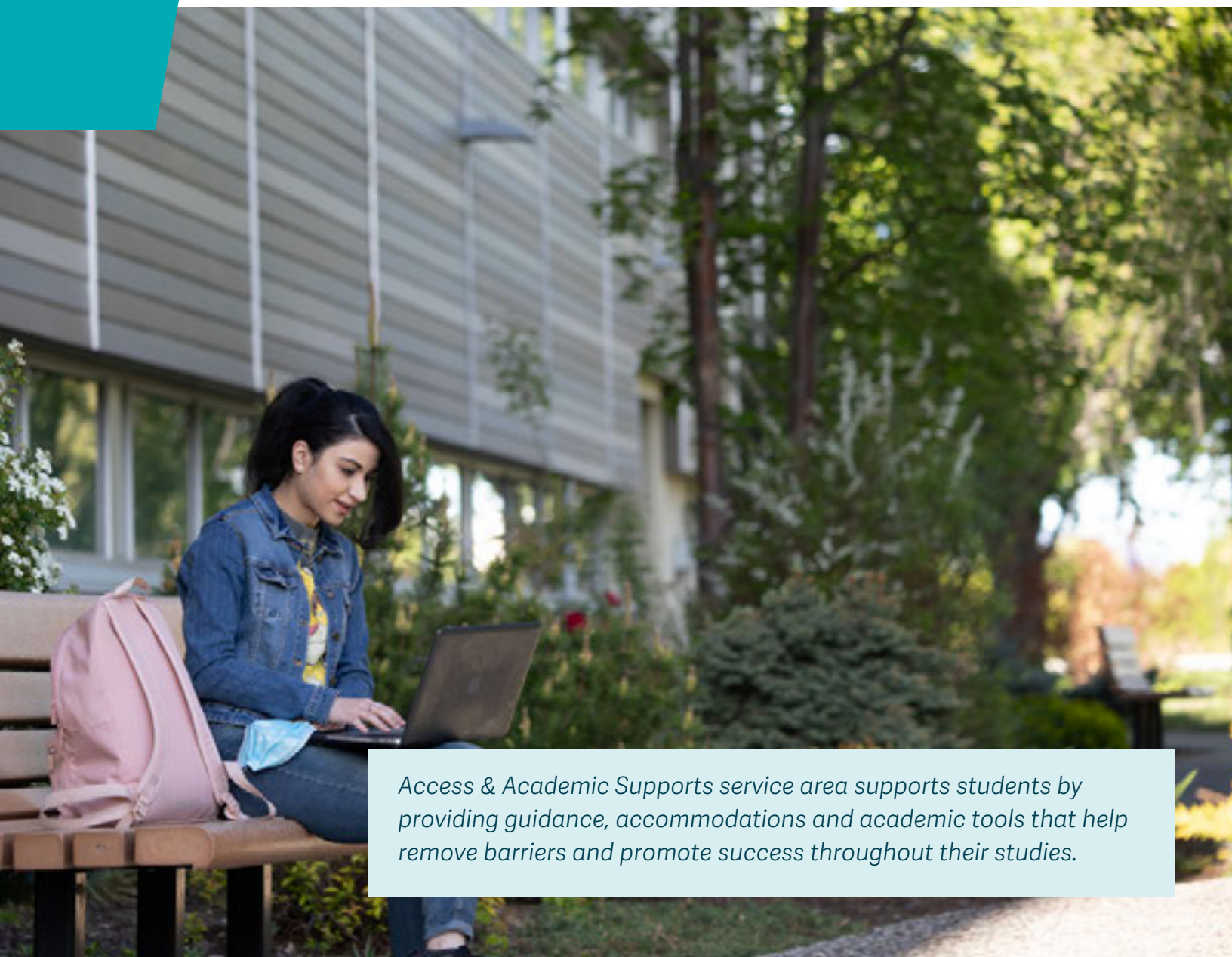
After reflecting on her life and her new chapter on campus, Tait is optimistic about the year ahead and the learning to come. "I'm grateful for the person I've become. I'm still working on myself, though, the journey never ends."



Sandra Tait had fond memories of her on-campus adventures from the past year.

Access & Academic Supports

Accessibility Services • Exams and Testing Services
Academic Advising • Pack Academic Edge



Access & Academic Supports service area supports students by providing guidance, accommodations and academic tools that help remove barriers and promote success throughout their studies.

Work smarter, not harder: strategizing for success

In her 26 years of assisting students, Learning Specialist **Evelyne Penny** has seen TRU evolve in numerous ways. When she started at TRU in 1999, the role was referred to as Disability Tutor 2; it was more of a tutoring-type position because the field of learning strategist or learning strategies hadn't developed yet. There was no Learning Specialists Association of Canada. The role has grown and so has the number of students served in our office in general. Suddenly, it was no longer just about tutoring; it was about providing strategies and increasing effectiveness through effective scheduling and time blocking. I always say, 'work smarter, not harder.'

With the ever-rising costs of living, "Life is so busy for many students. I always feel like students with disabilities often have to work a lot longer and a lot harder than their peers. They get there eventually, but it often takes longer; there are more implications because they're putting in longer hours, graduating later and accruing more student loan debt. Depending on the disability, it may impact not just their academic life, but also their personal life. It piles up."

Penny primarily sees students on campus but engages with Open Learning (OL) students when there's capacity. "OL has exploded this summer; it's exciting because I'm reaching more students. I feel like I've made a big difference to a lot of OL students by being a friendly face to support them when they're feeling isolated. Sometimes, just meeting with them and giving a big boost of encouragement is what they need."

Seeing students grow in confidence and experience success continues to be the real spark for Penny. "It's the reason I've done it for so long is because I really love the job, and to be in a helping position."

Part of Penny's role is as a cheerleader, celebrating a hard-earned C as well as the A's and B's. She also supports students holistically and acknowledges the many barriers to learning.



Haley Baker, who has taken both on-campus and OL courses in the Social Work program, cites Penny as a critical part of her own sobriety, recovery, and academic success story. "Evelyne was a huge part in seeing that journey unfold for me. During my first online year, I spent six weeks in a substance use treatment centre. She saw me through that experience, and I never felt judged. I didn't know what was going to happen during that period, but she was just so confident that I was going to make it. Doing the course throughout treatment helped ground me, too, because it was an Indigenous perspective course, which aided in what I was learning for myself in treatment. Having Evelyn's support was very special to me."

Baker shared that Accessibility Services is "so good at meeting students where they are, instead of trying to force them into goals that they might not be ready for yet. That's exactly the type of attitude that helped me out so much because it wasn't about 'You should graduate or you should do this.' It was about 'thank you for showing up.'"



Evelyne's support has been such a transformational experience. She's always worked with me step by step up until the point where I feel confident. She trusted me and my process, and that made all the difference. She's been awesome.

— Student Haley Baker

Envisioning a TRUly accessible institution

Established in the fall of 2023, the TRU Accessibility Committee was formed in response to the 2022 Accessible British Columbia Act. "It was an ongoing conversation for several years, with consultations starting back in 2019," said **Sarah Walz**, Director of Student Access and Academic Supports and committee co-chair. "It's been exciting to do some meaningful pan-campus work that's never happened before. It's wonderful to be a part of it."

Comprising a diverse group of students, staff, and faculty committed to removing barriers and promoting accessibility and inclusion, the team came together with relative ease. "There were many TRU community members who have a disability or lived experience with disability or are from a service provider that supports folks with disabilities, who came forward, and then other people who just had a real, genuine interest in the topic."

In the initial stages, "the question was whose work is it, and where does it live?" Walz said. "Accessibility Services was a common suggestion, but our scope is very specific. We support students who need accommodation tailored to their specific classroom, exam, or practical environment. We're not trained to make sure the ramps are to code. After a lot of discussion and consideration, the creation of the committee was led by People & Culture."

The 2024 survey provided a helpful starting point for the committee to identify goals, attitudes, priorities, and plans. They've since been acting as an advisory group to execute the action items.

Walz, whose passion for accessibility is evident, is optimistic about the future of accessibility. "Stigma is reducing," Walz said. "People are proud of disabilities being part of their life, and they're talking about it. There's now much more information available, and one of the best aspects of people learning is the benefits of diversity on their team or in their classroom. If it's not talked about, it's hard to know how to remove barriers and create a thriving and diverse team."

While she's a key contributor, she envisions a TRU where there's no need for accessibility committees. It would be nice for those considerations to be woven into our lives," she said. "An ideal community is where any student or colleague, regardless of their physical or mental abilities, can find their version of success. They can visit our spaces, enter our physical classrooms, and have access to learning or employment opportunities. That's my dream scenario: a TRU where people can engage in our campus community without jumping through hoops for equitable access to campus and learning opportunities. If we remove barriers, we wouldn't have to retrofit everything after the fact."

The Accessibility Committee:

1. Assist TRU in identifying barriers facing individuals in or interacting with the institution.
2. Advise TRU on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals interacting with the institution.
3. Provide a feedback mechanism for community members to share their thoughts on the accessibility of our campus.
4. Create a public-facing three-year accessibility plan (2025 - 2028).

The Accessibility Committee is committed to deconstructing ableism to foster a learning, working, and interacting environment that is safe and barrier-free at TRU.



A champion for OL staff and students

After 18 years as an OL Exams Supervisor, **Tod Denham** is motivated by a singular purpose: to be of service. “I like helping people. When I decided to move to TRU from the private sector, I was disillusioned. I wanted to do something a little more meaningful: be involved in the system that educates students. In this role, I feel like I can make a difference.”

When Denham first came to the role, Open Learning was in a state of transition. In 2005, when the Government of British Columbia granted TRU full university status, the institution absorbed the British Columbia Open University and relocated its services from Burnaby to the Kamloops campus in 2007. “Systems were set in place, so we couldn’t stop processes because students were in the middle of their courses; they still had to take their exams, whether we knew how to administer them or not,” he chuckled.

Still, despite a six-month period of wayfinding, the true north of Denham’s internal compass has always been care. He operates from a place that’s beyond self-serving or legacy building. “Ego’s never been a part of my work. I love to help; that’s why I’m doing it.”

Matt Dyck, Director of Student Engagement & Experience, said: “Tod has a reputation for going above and beyond for students. He once offered to supervise an exam at midnight, helping the student be successful within their own time zone. I was proud that he stepped up to help in a difficult circumstance.”

Dyck also noted that Denham was “instrumental in creating British Columbia’s first ever Academic Integrity Network, which addresses the significant challenges related to contract cheating and established TRU as a leader in the academic integrity space.”

Denham recognizes the critical importance of human contact in an increasingly online world. “Students still prefer a personal touch. When they take an online course, they lack the social interactions of the classroom experience; they don’t see their peers or the instructor. They can certainly ask questions, submit their work, and receive grades and feedback, but when it’s time for the exam,



they’re often longing for that personal connection. I’ve yet to come across a student who’s excited about or wants to take an exam. So, I tell my team that our job is to make that process as simple as possible for them, to try and lessen their anxiety.”

The same sentiment applies to communications, as online students will “look at the website and glean the information they can, but they still want to connect with someone real. Online students benefit from guidance and appreciate being walked through the process to gain a deeper understanding. The more information we can provide, whether through our website or communications, the better off they are.”

As a leader, Denham strives to boost confidence and awareness. “I tell my staff, ‘don’t be afraid to make mistakes’ as it’s an opportunity to learn from them to avoid repeating them. A mistake in our area could have a significant impact on the student’s life, as the final exam is a crucial component of their course. So, if things go awry, we could create anxiety for the student, so it’s a balancing act. But I’d never look down on you for making an error, because mistake-making is a certainty.”

While retirement is somewhere on the horizon, Denham is enjoying the present and “loving” his work.



OL has been growing in double-digit percentages for years now. I see TRU as being well-positioned to expand, given that we already have a well-established online division. The technology behind the services will enable more interactive engagement with online students, allowing them to feel part of the TRU experience, even if they’re a world away.

— Tod Denham

Beloved OL Advisor advocates for personal connection

Tony Kuczma began his career in post-secondary education in 1987. As a program assistant at the Open Learning Institute (OLI) in Richmond, B.C., he worked on publications and scheduled telecourses on the Knowledge Network. He also worked with students and program advisors to develop and execute program planning.

"I really liked working with students and answering their questions and knew this was what I wanted to do for a living. I felt part of a community; I got involved in activities that I never had a chance to do previously. I volunteered during the Knowledge Network drives, joined clubs, and volunteered at campus events."

The Open Learning Institute merged with the Knowledge Network in 1988, becoming the Open Learning Agency (OLA), which was subsequently integrated into TRU in 2005. "I was delighted to become part of a university. I loved working at a physical campus and having students around all the time. I again felt that I was part of a community here at TRU and took advantage of the activities here. I joined the Toastmasters Club, played bocce and cornhole, volunteered at TRU Convocations, and attended many lectures given by visiting speakers."

Kuczma eventually became a TRU-OL program advisor in the 1990s and early 2000s, which involved meeting with numerous students and handling a high volume of telephone calls. "We had a lot more direct contact with students in those days."

The most significant change Kuczma has seen in his nearly 40 years in post-secondary education is "the decline in direct contact with students. Partly that's due to student preferences, but it's a trend that TRU has driven. We've increasingly directed students away from interacting with real people and toward websites and chatbots. I worry about the future consequences of this trend. Talking to students directly has such positive benefits – it inspires and motivates them, and most importantly, it provides dignity by acknowledging them as human beings and giving them a chance to be heard. The support and encouragement from an advisor can inspire students to do great things."



Advisors truly are the heart of the university. They provide care, guidance, and coaching to students as they navigate their educational goals and dreams. Tony has set the standard for excellence in advising. He has unwavering dedication to and is deeply invested in the students that he supports. Every year, at convocation, students seek Tony out to personally thank him. Tony has been referred to, many times, as the 'rock star' of advising – a title he has thoroughly earned!

— Matt Dyck

Matt Dyck, Director of Student Engagement and Experience says "Not only is human connection key to recruitment, achievement, and retention, but it's also critical to staff wellbeing and satisfaction. These conversations help staff better understand the student life experience and provide opportunities to witness growth, redemption, and successes, both big and small."

"I'm very proud to have helped hundreds of online students reach their educational goals. I am very grateful that TRU gave me a chance to do this type of work and trusted me to represent the university to the public. It has truly been an honour to work at TRU."



Revamping Academic Advising

Shifting perspectives to adopt a more holistic advising approach, a student-centred hub-and-spokes structure was designed to offer clear, cohesive, consistent, and centralized services at TRU.

Now, for the first time this fall, students will proceed directly to their program and/or faculty or school for advising support. Undecided students will go to Central Advising, which will operate as a training hub for program advisors on specific student populations (e.g., Indigenous, international, mature, athletes, and first-generation students formally in care).

Creating a streamlined model of advising is crucial for students, as it provides a sense of belonging to their faculty, key milestones and clear messaging, identifies at-risk students, and facilitates developmental pathway planning.

The values of the hub-and-spokes structure:

1) Student-Centered: Develop a sense of belonging and promote student retention through early access to program advisors within faculties and schools.

2) Holistic: Utilize a case management and holistic approach—prescriptive, developmental, proactive, and/or appreciative—that meets students where they are.

Steps Taken:

- Positive, productive discussions with faculties and schools.
- An internal website was developed as a resource for campus advisors.
- Best practices were shared among the TRU advising community.
- Concise, effective and timely communication with students was written and workshopped.
- Streamlined training and professional development opportunities continue to take place for advisors.



I look forward to increased collaboration and connections across campus.

— Advisor feedback about the revamp

Advisors play a crucial role in the TRU student's journey:

Academic Planning

- Creating a customized academic plan that aligns with educational and career goals.
- Assisting in selecting appropriate courses, majors, and minors and providing guidance on prerequisites, course sequencing, and preparing for professional programs.
- Program-level advising supports student course planning, proactive outreach, and a sense of belonging.

Goal Setting

- Identifying and setting short and long-term academic and career goals.

Resource Referral

- Connecting students to various campus resources that support career counselling, mental health, accessibility accommodations, and tutoring services to overcome challenges that affect academic performance.

Strategizing

- Working toward resolving academic challenges to develop academic resilience.



A huge kudos to all campus advisors for the amazing work they do supporting students!

— Charlene Munro



Through meaningful and supportive dialogues, advisors provide constructive feedback to nurture student growth and personal development.

Academic Advising at PACE

Thomas Copeland continued to enhance academic support for student-athletes by setting up an informal advising ‘kiosk’ at PACE once a month. His attendance at PACE was strategically timed around key academic calendar dates. This year, Thomas also participated in PACE orientation, where he introduced his role and outlined how he could assist students throughout the year. This early introduction proved valuable, particularly for student-athletes, as it established familiarity before his first on-site session in October just ahead of the withdrawal deadline.

Throughout the academic year, Thomas attended PACE on five separate occasions, resulting in 32 one-on-one advising sessions held during study hall. His availability at PACE provided students with convenient, immediate access to academic advising and encouraged follow-up appointments outside of PACE hours. Thomas’s ongoing presence has significantly increased Academic Advising’s visibility and accessibility for student-athletes.



Embedding mental health supports into WolfPack’s athletic culture

Erin Pincott, Learning Strategist, Athletics, and **Shyann Vosper**, Registered Clinical Counsellor, collaborated to create new programming and deliver a workshop series at PACE. Having both been student-athletes in university, they understand how pressure and packed schedules can impact quality of life.

The Wellness in Academics, Sport, and Life series workshops enhanced the holistic development of student-athletes, increased academic achievement, promoted life skills, and increased awareness and access to resources related to mental health and career development. To promote well-being, sessions focused on topics such as mental health awareness, test anxiety, sleep, and other strategies to help navigate the stressors of school, sports, and life. The series also provided a meaningful leadership opportunity for PACE leaders, each of whom co-presented a session with Vosper, reinforcing their role as peer mentors within the program.

“Bringing Shyann into the PACE fold provided access and further embedded counselling services into athletics while targeting concerns that student-athletes commonly experience,” Pincott said.

“We were intent on establishing a trusted environment within the WolfPack community, making mental health support more accessible and acceptable, thus breaking down barriers to seeking help,” said Vosper.

Curtis Atkinson, Director, Athletics & Recreation, added that mental health-related programming has “brought tremendous value to the department in ways that support student-athletes, coaches, and staff.”

The “initiative led to increased attendance at PACE, broadening the program’s scope to include student-athletes in any year of study, and fostering a culture of holistic well-being and academic success within the TRU WolfPack.” Pincott said. “It also allowed for inter-team collaboration, helping to build connections across sports and years of study.”

With both Pincott and Vosper located across the hall from each other in the TRU Gym, they have noticed that more and more student-athletes are engaging in the services offered. “Being physically present where student-athletes train and compete helps build trust with teams and individuals, reducing stigma and encouraging proactive mental health management as part of the student-athlete experience,” Vosper said. “Mental health awareness and access to supports are increasingly becoming part of WolfPack’s athletic culture,” said Vosper.



This series provided a great opportunity for student-athletes to learn how to balance sports and life better.

— PACE leader Nya Derkach

Envisioning a future beyond PACE

Student-athletes understand that, whether on the court, on the field, in the classroom, or in professional development, timing is everything. As many senior PACE leaders prepare to graduate, they're sharing their tips and insights on maintaining the Pack Academic Edge and mapping out a career path well before you cross the convocation stage.

Erin Pincott states, "watching these PACE Leaders take initiatives not just in their roles as peer mentors, but also in shaping their own academic and professional futures - from securing roles in accounting, applying to master's programs and conducting undergraduate research, they've shown what's possible when you plan, stay curious and take advantage of the opportunities around you. Their thoughtful approach to career planning, balancing personal goals and timing, offers a valuable roadmap for the next generation of student-athletes preparing to chart their own paths beyond TRU."

- Baseball player Noah Wonnick recognized that he had "more reach and ability to help" teammates struggling with these courses. He is now focused on becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in Saskatoon, SK.
- Chemical Biology major and volleyball middle Caitlin Larrigan prepared for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and recommends "researching doctors from different teaching institutions and ask for advice and mentorship or job shadowing opportunities."
- Computer Science student and basketball forward Asher Mayan is pursuing a Bachelor of Education (BEd) in secondary school STEM education. He recommends preparing early for any post-grad program or job opportunity.
- Outside hitter for the volleyball team, Matthew Hamilton, a BBA Finance major and CPA candidate, secured a position with McCain's in Toronto, ON. He adds: "Recruiters generally hire at least a year in advance, so I'd recommend starting early."
- Soccer midfielder and psychology major Caylah Lemon is pursuing her counselling degree online through Yorkville. She plans to live in Europe with her partner, an athlete living in Slovakia.



To wrap up the year in a fun way, Pincott took the PACE Leaders curling for friendly competition and pizza.

- Cheerleader and nursing student Kennedy Love is pursuing a career in maternal and/or child health. She states: "Working as an employed student nurse in pediatrics helped me get my foot in the door and be considered for a new graduate position in a highly sought-after field."
- Psychology major and basketball player Nya Derkach pursues a graduate degree in clinical psychology and is consistently seeking opportunities to reach her goals. She completed an internship and research project in Wales.
- Natural Resource Science student and soccer goalkeeper Olivier Jumeau enjoys research and hopes to study the impacts of wolverine and grizzly bear predation on caribou calf survival as part of his PhD in wildlife ecology in western Canada.

"It's been a joy getting to know this dedicated group of graduating student-athletes over the past two years," said Learning Strategist Erin Pincott.



They each brought something unique to their role as peer mentors, with their own strengths, interests, and personalities that made our team stronger. Their leadership, compassion, and commitment to supporting fellow student-athletes will leave a lasting mark on the PACE Program and the TRU WolfPack community.

— Erin Pincott

Student Affairs & Wellbeing

Student Services Administration • Medical Clinic • Student Affairs
Sexualized Violence and Prevention Response • Counselling



Community Standards & Wellbeing service area supports students by promoting safety, accountability and wellbeing through integrated services that respond to diverse needs and complex challenges.

Student Services administrative team has the answer to all of TRU's Q&As

While the key purpose of the front desk support is to manage the day-to-day traffic of Student Services, **Val Jacobs**, **Kaitlyn Cecchini**, and **Yvonne Hamer** have also proven to be an info center for general inquiries at TRU. The staff are frequently asked about IT Services, the Bookstore, career services, admissions, academic supports, Home Stay, the Assessment Centre, as well as many other services and supports unrelated to their department.

With the closure of the campus cashier, the team has noticed an increase in inquiries. Of course, it's not just students who have questions - the front desk is a hub for staff to ask questions. If, on rare occasions, the team needs more information, they'll be sure to find out. Either way, the team responds with curiosity and care.

Allysa Gredling, Student Development Administrative Coordinator, said, "The admin team supports students, colleagues, and community members in their engagement with TRU. Regardless of who finds their way to us, these dedicated and caring individuals regularly go above and beyond to ensure that people are treated with respect and receive the assistance they need."

While most people might know where the Lost & Found is (Security Kiosk in Old Main), what you might not know is that all USB/memory sticks are sent to the IT Department, located in OM 1326.

When students inquire about their campus ID, the team encourages them to send their picture to selfie@tru.ca. Anything related to your bus pass takes place at the Student Union (which is the same place you'd pick up your campus card and ask questions about your health care plan).

When international students inquire about work, the team encourages them to speak to their International Student Advisor (ISA). When staff inquire about counselling services, they're directed to LifeWorks.



Val Jacobs, Kaitlyn Cecchini, and Yvonne Hamer (left to right) handle everything from scheduling, room bookings, inventory management, purchasing, event support, intake, and so much more.

Often, prospective students who are lost wander in, and they are directed to the Future Students' Office. The team is frequently asked about Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), the Math Help Centre, on-campus bus stops, car troubleshooting (including dead batteries, flat tires, and keys locked in the car), and accessing official or unofficial transcripts. They are also often asked about applying and registering for Convocation & Graduation, as well as where to rent the gowns.

"Whether they are triaging student requests, supporting individuals with wayfinding on campus, tracking down contact information, getting clarity on internal processes, navigating serious student crises, or managing any other number of daily queries, their ability to understand the inner workings of TRU and translate it for others seems limitless."

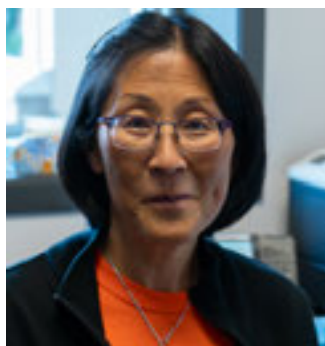


I'm so thankful to have such a knowledgeable and compassionate team supporting the work we all do, and I encourage others to consider how their efforts make all of our loads a little lighter.

— Allysa Gredling

Medical Clinic crucial to the Student Services network

The TRU Medical Clinic serves registered on-campus students who require medical support during their time studying in Kamloops. In her nearly 20 years at the clinic, **Doctor Hilary Yoshida** has noticed that “mental health concerns have come more to the forefront. The culture is shifting; students are feeling more empowered to combat stigma and self-advocate. These students are so brave to be facing their issues, making appointments, and showing up. As doctors, we are happy to help them make informed decisions, to make them feel heard, and empower them to take care of their health and well-being.”



Dr Hilary Yoshida

While services include prescriptions and medication management, birth control education, sexually transmitted infection screening and treatment, immunizations, and pregnancy testing, mental health concerns are increasingly taking center stage in conversations. “We’re doing what we can to help reframe medical issues”, said Doctor Yoshida. “Part of the work is reminding students that invisible conditions matter as much as visible ones. If you had a broken arm, you would get a cast. If you needed mental health support, there are remedies for that too.”

Yoshida feels honoured to contribute to on campus medical clinic services, especially to students who need that attention most. “We meet with a wide range of students, many who are far away from home. We do what we can to help them navigate medical challenges at a critical point in their lives, but we’re not alone; the university as a whole does so much for student wellness.”

A highlight of supporting a student population is akin to “the beauty of family medicine; it provides a continuity of care. It’s rewarding to see students improve, gain knowledge and find purpose. We’re here to support them in doing so, but we wouldn’t be able to do this without Student Services,” she said.

Influenza and COVID Clinic more successful than ever

Through an ongoing partnership with the School of Nursing and Student Services, nursing students administered influenza and vaccinations on campus for the fifth year in a row.

Fall 2024 also marked the first year COVID-19 immunizations were administered to staff, faculty, and their peers at these clinics. This initiative, supported by the TRU Medical Clinic and the Public Health Unit in Kamloops, provided 753 influenza vaccine doses (150 more from 2023) and 445 COVID-19 vaccine doses.



1198

TOTAL IMMUNIZATIONS
ADMINISTERED



5

NURSING FACULTY
MEMBERS
who participated



18

CLINICS
took place in October
and November



40

SECOND-YEAR
BSCN STUDENTS
participated, most
administering their first
injection to a client



As part of promotions to prevent the spread of illness, Storyteller Ppriyanka Bokey got her first flu and COVID vaccines on-camera.

From siloed to centred: the future of academic integrity

After a lengthy transitional process, the reins have officially been passed from the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) to the Office of Mission Fulfilment and Quality Assurance. The newly created Centre for Academic Integrity (CAI) will have more capacity in terms of staffing, outreach, education, prevention and case management.

"With around 500 cases adjudicated last year, centralization of tracking, education, and process oversight is critical under the new policy to ensure that cases are sanctioned fairly," Cassie Greenough, Director of Student Affairs, said. **Julia Hedge** was initially hired as an assistant to support OSA with a focus on Academic Integrity. She provided consistent administration for a very active Senate Committee on campus, the Academic Integrity Committee (AIC). She utilized her creative mind as an artist to devise innovative ways to connect her work with the student experience. Even when completing administrative tasks, she exemplified a community-focused, student-centered approach to supporting student services."

Once the AIC amended the policy, Hedge worked closely with Shannon Smyrl to facilitate the transition. "The new policy is more comprehensive. It allows initial departure decisions within the department and looks to the AIC for repeat departures, which means that first departures can be addressed quickly and be more remedial."

The updated policy requires a centralized location, allowing multiple people to enter conditions and sanctions from individual departmental investigations. This new resource hub serves as a central point for communication with deans and instructors. "I think it's in the right house," Hedge said. "OSA has been stretched at capacity for a very long time."

Understanding the root causes of academic dishonesty is key to prevention. The pressure is so enormous, it's often an act of desperation. "Some students are here because their village pooled all their resources to send them to TRU. The student's mission is to earn their degree and return to that village to become a leader. The fear of going home in disgrace can be intense," Hedge said.



I'm still passionate about the AIC. I'll miss working with this amazing committee. I feel deeply connected to the individuals in this group, and I'm happy to have served them for the past four years. Ultimately, my passion is Student Affairs and TRU. Any work that helps the students will fulfill that need for me. This is the first job I've ever had where I felt seen as an employee. I felt like I could help people and institute changes.

"If a student couldn't focus on their work because of hunger, the problem is not actually that they can't work; it's that they're not being nourished. So, let's try to feed you. Or let's remedy procrastination with course relief, support from instructors, or other academic resources. Work with a learning strategist on some scheduling strategies to avoid being disorganized and making mistakes," she continued.

Community and connection are also critical to academic well-being. Hedge refers to the healing and restorative powers of Learning from the Land. "We were all sitting together and beading. I love events like the SVPR Make and Learns, as that kind of collective creativity is so often missing from our world."

As the student experience evolves, a gap persists between students and a comprehensive understanding of academic integrity. "Promotions are often perceived as dull and dry and require increasingly creative ways to engage students," Hedge said. "When I first joined the AIC, I spoke with a first-year student and asked what they knew about academic integrity. They rolled their eyes and said, 'It's all we've talked about, but it's so boring. It doesn't relate to the subject at all.' That's discouraging to hear," Hedge said. "Engaging in playful, interactive instruction is part of the solution. We need to gamify and incentivize the message at the front end of the student's study. We need to get into the minds of the students and address it from their perspective. Inquiring into a student's understanding is crucial. We don't all come from the same background. Common ground is required to employ common sense."

The continued evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) is making it increasingly challenging for institutions to stay ahead in implementing effective academic integrity policies.

“AI is a whole new world, and it’s not going anywhere”, Hedge said. “It behooves us, as a university, to acquire the knowledge, understand it comprehensively, and instruct in the ethical practices surrounding those tools.

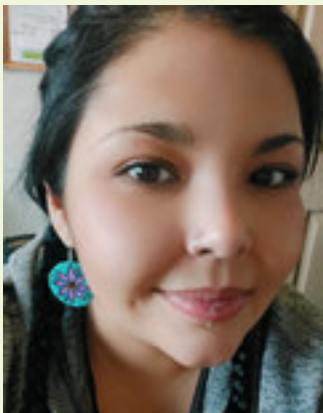
The challenges we’ve faced with artificial intelligence have skyrocketed in the last year. “I don’t think it’s wise of us to turn our backs on that world. We need to delve into it as

thoroughly as possible. The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) has some great resources on how to use AI ethically.”

Cassie Greenough agreed: “As artificial intelligence evolves, the university needs to create a unified approach to understanding and using it as an effective and ethical tool for academia.”

While Hedge continues to be interested and invested in academic integrity, she’s made peace with this change.

Supporting former youth in care at TRU



As a former student, **Ayla Joe** knows how overwhelming the application process and university life can be.

“Navigating the TRU website was confusing; if I closed a window, it was almost impossible for me to find my way back,” she said. “There were many supports and resources listed, but I

struggled to identify the specific support and contacts related to me and my situation.” When it came time to register for classes, she said, “I had no clue what I was doing.”

After graduating with her Master of Arts Degree in Human Rights and Social Justice in 2024, she was invited by Sara Wolfe to work alongside the Office of Student Affairs on the Former Youth in Care Program.

This project was initiated to enhance the overall university experience and help current and future students achieve their educational objectives. The guide also explores new ways that TRU can better support former youth in care as they transition into university, ultimately creating a more effective roadmap for success.

This work began with a report that contained information collected from connecting with various departments at TRU to determine the support services and resources available to students, as well as their experiences working with former youth in care. “This project enabled us to identify the services that were lacking and the changes that could be made to make the application process more efficient,” Joe said.

The next step was to put together a focus group where we could speak to former youth in care and hear firsthand about their experiences with applying to University and attending their first year at TRU.”

This work included collaborations not only with different departments at TRU but also with surrounding organizations, such as A Way Home Kamloops and the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society.



This whole experience has ignited a passion for advocating for current and former students to help them achieve success in their academic careers.

— Ayla Joe

The human side of the job

Students face a wide range of challenges, obstacles, and impediments throughout their university experience, and no one understands this better than the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). “The ever-increasing cost of living, mental health concerns, gender-based violence, racism, global unrest, loneliness, living in a new country – it’s like pushing a snowball up the hill; the stressors accumulate. We can’t always expect them to be OK. It’s a big ask,” said **Eryn Barrett**, OSA Case Manager.

Students often need recommendations, referrals, and reassurance from the OSA. “It helps to be reminded that mistakes or missed opportunities are sources of learning that support processing, regulating and moving forward,” Barrett said. “But all too often, they’re in crisis by the time they come to the Office. But while there are genuine challenges in life, “concerns, and subsequent conversations, are rarely just about class. It’s about navigating the complexities of life.”

She tears up when thinking of the “bravery” of these students, and what it means to feel seen. “We try to meet them where they’re at. Helping them feel welcome and safe to be vulnerable is the most human side of the job. This work touches your heart and transcends to other relationships with friends, family and colleagues. I wish I had known about this work 20 years ago.”

Before joining the OSA team, Barrett had supported two departments in a dual role for Pack Academic Edge (PACE) and as an administrator for the Athletics department. She also competed as a diver in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta and again in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney.

Part of the athletic experience was about physical excellence and emotional restraint, with Barrett describing herself as stoic, unemotional, and unflappable. While she has tremendous appreciation for the experience, she’s conscious that there was some healing to do after the fact.

“Looking back, I don’t know if that pressure was mentally healthy, especially if joy leaves the sport. Emotion was perceived as weakness. Who you are is often defined by your results. The athletic culture is very outcome-driven.”

A critical moment in Barrett’s life came during her second Olympic competition. “I was looking up at the scoreboard, and the results left me heartbroken. The inner monologue was a loop of ‘you failed, you didn’t deserve this, you’ve let your family down, you’ve let your coach, your teammates, and your country down.’ Then I had to face the media with that mindset and a stiff upper lip. I never missed a podium after the ‘96 Olympics, so it was humbling to feel like a failure at the height of my career, in front of the world.”

Her perspective has shifted over time. “What I did was cool, but it’s not who I am. To stop chasing the gold medal also meant to stop chasing perfectionism. I would tell my younger self to enjoy the experience more - be more present, enjoy making mistakes, and embrace change.”

Whenever she talks to students as a case manager or to athletes as a Diving Canada team manager (she is also an official judge), she strives to share the wisdom from her life experience. “I celebrate wins, offer consolations for losses, and try to instill the idea that challenges or disruptions aren’t the end. The imperfections in our journey are what make us human. How we respond is what defines us.”

While her Olympic story isn’t always explicitly mentioned, students might ask questions when they notice the posters in her office, creating an opportunity to discuss pressure, perfectionism, self-compassion, care, and forgiveness.

She cites the OSA team dynamic as being critical to her holistic well-being, particularly in heart-wrenching cases. “I don’t need to have all the answers. You never feel like you’re flying solo with director Cassie Greenough and fellow case managers Holly Winzey and Karen Nichols on your side. “I’ve learned so much from them about not judging circumstances, understanding what people are dealing with and where they’re coming from, and not making assumptions. There’s always more to the story,” she said.”



The students we serve are changing my life. I do not take it for granted that I’m trusted with this job.

— Eryn Barrett



SVPR and P&C collaborate to provide comprehensive training

Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response worked with People & Culture over the last year to refresh the employee-specific training, now available on Deltek. This training provides staff and faculty with the tools needed to provide a trauma-informed response to anyone in the TRU community.

Strategies were:

- **trauma-informed**
- **survivor-centered**
- **response-based**

Upon completion, participants will be able to:

- **understand how rape culture perpetuates violence and unsafe responses**
- **inform about available supports**
- **assist in accessing these services**
- **help someone regain control by trusting their decisions on what to do next**

Preventing and responding to sexualized violence cannot be done in isolation; we all have a role to play when supporting victims/survivors. TRU is committed to raising awareness and educating the campus community about sexualized violence, developing a consent culture, reducing the risk of incidents of sexualized violence, responding to the needs of victims/survivors for support and empowerment, and responding to incidents of sexualized violence effectively and fairly.

All faculty, staff, and administrators are required to undergo mandatory training on the fundamentals of receiving a disclosure and providing support. All employees are required to take Responding to Disclosures training per TRU's Sexualized Violence Policy (BRD-25).

Assessing perceptions of sexualized violence

To encourage student participation, the 2025 survey included a prize draw to incentivize participation, which was promoted in all communications to maximize effectiveness in boosting response rates. The draw offered a higher turnout in student participation than the previous survey.

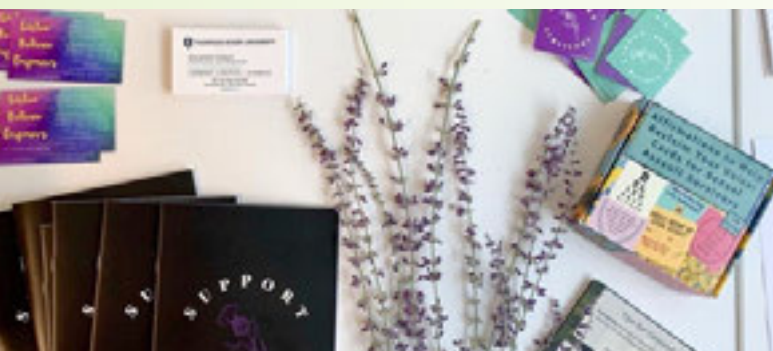
- "My school does a good job of clearly communicating about resources and supports available to people impacted by sexualized violence." 90%
- "I know where to find information and support related to sexualized violence on campus or on the website." 83%
- "My school provides adequate awareness about education on sexual assault, including unwanted sexual contact of a sexual nature." 83%

SVPR Ambassadors heighten campus visibility

Feedback from the 2022 Ministry of Advanced Education Survey indicated that the TRU community wanted the SVPR Office to engage in more high-visibility activities. To address this gap, SVPR piloted a Peer Menotr Ambassador Program. Bachelor of Social Work students **Jayden Scherbarth** and **Karlle Clarke** were hired to work three to five hours per week from September 2024 to April 2025.

As ambassadors, Scherbarth and Clarke focused on bi-monthly student outreach and engagement initiatives, hosting pop-up table events in Residence, Indigenous Student Services, and the Writing Centre. The duo also facilitated short introductory presentations in classroom settings. They also supported the development of four workshop toolkits for Residence Advisors. Both students appreciated the opportunities to reflect on experiences and projects. "I gained a lot of knowledge and wisdom from those conversations with Amber Huva," Clarke said. Scherbarth added: "Debriefing was helpful for me when we talked about challenging aspects of anti-violence work."

Huva appreciated their enthusiasm, "They bring fresh ideas that benefit our programming. They bring hopefulness and light to our office's work, and we're lucky to have them."



Tools for Change

This 6-hour, in-person training provided to a select group of students across campus, including Residence Advisors, Peer Leaders and Mentors, and first-year students in the Engineering, Culinary, and Adventure Studies Diploma programs. In a mixture of group discussion and small group activities, participants learned about consent, bystander intervention and supporting survivors, as well as information about the roots of sexualized violence and services available on campus and in the community.

SVPR Manager Amber Huva and former SVPR Manager Meaghan Hagerty first developed this training in 2019 at the request of students from the Adventure Studies diploma program. Bolstered by strong support from their faculty, the Adventure program became the first program on campus to make SVPR training mandatory for its students.

"These workshops provided TRU engineering students with critical training to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment", said Catherine Tatarniuk, Assistant Teaching Professor. "Since SVPR began providing training for students, we have observed a substantial decrease in reports of harassment and discrimination, along with an overall improvement in the way students interact with one another. It is evident from observing our students both within and outside of these workshops that they open the doors for more difficult conversations that are needed to change the future and narrative within engineering."



104

STUDENTS
attended Tools for
Change training in
24/25

Creating accessible, peer-led SV programming for Residence

Over the last year, SVPR's collaborations with Residence have grown steadily. Students in Residence are a key audience for SVPR's programming and an important site for support services. Initiatives included:

- **Expanded Red Zone outreach**

Every Friday night, TRU Residence hosted a tabling event in all the residence buildings. Weekly themes aligned with the campaign, promoting topics such as Safer Partying, Consent, and Supporting Survivors, reaching 410 students over six weeks.

- **SV Programming Tool Kits**

SVPR staff, Ambassadors, Residence staff, and a BSW social work practicum student developed four workshop toolkits for Residence Advisors. They created accessible, modifiable peer-led programming on survivor support, consent, bystander intervention, and healthy relationships. Each kit includes a slide deck of content and resources, as well as games, activities, and discussion questions that Residence Advisors can "mix and match" when creating events. This workshop pilot is scheduled to begin in Fall 2025.

- **SV survey promotion**

Residence hosted a series of tabling events with the SVPR Student Ambassadors to promote the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills' *Student Perceptions of Sexualized Violence Survey*. As a result, TRU received 1,553 submissions from students.

Brandon Jodoin, *Interim General Manager of East Village & Coyote Den*, said: "By supporting the initial training of student leaders and live-in professional staff, we've maximized prevention, outreach and support efforts for students living on campus. Engaging in proactive programming provides an increased sense of safety within the community, further increasing confidence and capacity to ensure responses are trauma-informed and aligned with the SVPR messaging."

Cultivating Resilience to Combat Loss

Counsellor **Kristin Robinson** delves into the complex nature of grief after a romantic (or friendship) loss and shares a recovery toolkit for healing. “No relationship is the same; therefore, no loss is the same. While much of my programming focuses on romantic relationships, it’s important to note that my toolkit for healing is applicable in various ways. Heartbreak often equals change, sometimes welcomed, sometimes unwelcomed — either way, it’s still a painful process that impacts your routine and general well-being, which can be particularly disruptive to student life. Whether that’s a break-up, a friendship falling apart, the death of a family member, losing a job, failing a course, feeling homesick or missing a pet — the pain can be just as acute.”

Common reactions to loss:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Crying
- Over-working or not working at all
- Sleeping too much or not at all
- Reduced appetite or increased appetite
- Not being able to focus
- Engaging in coping mechanisms not generally in line with values or goals

A broken heart can be physically and emotionally taxing. Robinson hosted an educational workshop that included a self-compassion exercise and a guided meditation.



Mindful Matters: Strategies for Building Resilience

Students explored strategies like mindfulness & nervous system regulation to better cope with stress, negative self-talk, sleep problems and other challenges that can impact their overall wellbeing. Weekly drop-in sessions were facilitated by Counsellor **Susan Butland** in the Inclusion and Wellness Activity Room.

Problem Solve with Short-term Counselling

Counselling Services offered a pilot program for drop-in appointments four days a week in Winter 2025.

These one-time sessions helped students troubleshoot and strategize solutions to current challenges. Counsellor **Shelley Blair** shared some tips on how to prepare for a drop-in session:

- Identify what you would like to get out of the session, even if it's just to feel better or manage anxiety. This clarity ensures that counsellors ask the right questions. After the appointment, celebrate your courage for reaching out for support and being vulnerable! Just showing up is amazing!
- Remember that small steps can turn goals into action. For example, getting your gym clothes ready the night before will increase your chances of actually going.
- If you feel nervous talking to a counsellor, visualize sitting with your closest confidant, who always has your back and never tells any of your secrets.
- If you need some grounding, imagine yourself as a mighty oak tree whose leaves sway gently in the breeze but are strongly connected to the ground.

Vulnerability and mindfulness key to authentic counselling

As part of his practicum experience required to complete his master's in counselling psychology from Yorkville, **Austin Berardi** completed 200 direct hours and 200 indirect hours over eight months with Counselling Services. He spent time in one-on-one counselling sessions and co-facilitated the Indigenous Wellness Circle in House 5 with counsellor Andrea Brassard.

"Austin was very unique," Brassard noted. "He was authentic and true to himself. He broadened my understanding of the many ways in which we can hold space for others and be helpful. He was such a gift, and he taught me a lot."

At first, Berardi grappled with self-doubt. "I saw a maximum of two students a day, and I'd go home exhausted, which was quite anxiety-provoking. I thought, 'Whoa, maybe this isn't for me.' But over time, I could confidently see five students a day, and I didn't feel anywhere near that same amount of stress. Once I learned more about the other resources, I could refer students to, the work aligned with what I thought counselling would be like."

He also developed strategies to decompress, protect his energy, and prevent burnout by prioritizing play as part of his work-life balance. This process took time to develop. "Learning how to be vulnerable and present with clients, students, and colleagues was a crucial part of this experience."

When it comes to fostering a productive relationship, Berardi recognizes that students need to feel part of the process.

Berardi noticed that whether in one-on-one sessions or group sessions, there were different stories and scenarios that almost always boiled down to anxiety and grief. He also cited relationship challenges, ranging from friendships to interactions with instructors, as a significant source of stress.

Individual sessions can be invaluable for exploring deeper concerns but building up to those deep conversations slowly and hearing different perspectives from a multitude of other students, as well as the counsellors, can be beneficial. "The camaraderie and sense of connection, especially with the students who attended most regularly, flourished over time. The sharing got much deeper as we grew closer over time. It was critical to convey that sharing isn't mandatory," Berardi said. "You didn't have to participate; you could always pass. It's a judgment-free zone."

By the end of the semester, Berardi said it "was hard to say goodbye" to his student, and colleagues. "I worked most closely with Andrea. I saw how she held herself and created space for others, and it helped me grow. I think that was really, truly impactful and important to me."

"Austin was so thoughtful and considerate," Brassard said. "He took the printed resources for master's students that I've been collecting over the last 15 years and compiled, organized and uploaded them on a USB drive. The act and the outcome were so precise, accurate and demonstrative of being a supportive person. He's a very caring and capable new counsellor. I'm delighted to have him as a peer."

One of the most crucial factors to convey is that counselling is collaborative. Just because one style works for one person, it might not work for another. It's important for someone to feel they have the ability to customize the experience.

— Austin Berardi



Reframing impostor syndrome as a valuable tool

As a counsellor and facilitator, **Kristin Robinson** brings a fresh, youthful vitality to her work. A die-hard Swiftie fan of the Mean Girls, Jurassic Park and the Twilight trilogy, she often incorporates creative, pop-culture perspectives into her work on relational well-being, survivorship of sexualized violence, and body positivity.

Before graduating from high school in Victoria, B.C., she completed eleventh grade while living in Perth, Australia. She earned her Honours degree in English (with a focus on film, media and cultural studies) and Psychology from Bishop's University (BU) in Sherbrooke, Quebec. She served as vice president and president of the Gender Equity Centre, sat on the Status of Women committee, helped advocate for and implement consent programming, and delivered training to a first-year cohort for three consecutive years.

Post-convocation, Robinson remained at BU for two years as a Residence Life Coordinator, where she created and co-facilitated the first-ever sexual violence support group on campus.

Living on campus in a professional capacity wore on Robinson, especially as the role had around-the-clock expectations. She left BU and spent a year travelling around South and Central America. On the other side of her adventures, she joined McGill as the Residence Life Manager and continued to engage in efforts to prevent and respond to sexualized violence.

Amid the COVID-19 shutdown, Robinson relocated to Toronto and began the Master of Social Work program at Carleton University online. She completed her first social worker placement as a student counsellor for Algonquin College in Ottawa, where she eventually moved for in-person courses. While completing her second placement as a sexual violence policy intern for Algonquin residences, she worked as a residence life coordinator. Robinson also volunteered at the Sexual Assault Support Centre in Ottawa.

After submitting all her coursework for her master's, Robinson said, in her usual sardonic self-effacing wit, she "quit residence for good and took a month off to cry and agonize over whether I had ruined my life, wondering if I should have done something different, before eventually settling into a sense of peace and purposefulness."

While Robinson required time to process, decompress and heal, she wasn't afraid to question her choices. "I think self-doubt is vital to the helping profession. Impostor syndrome can be a valuable tool for staying grounded, curious and critical of your own counselling practices."

From there, Robinson became a counsellor at Family Services Ottawa, supporting their anti-violence program, transitional-aged youth program, and "quick response" counselling team for individuals being discharged from the hospital who may still benefit from psychiatric support in the community.

Now a tenure-tracked counsellor at TRU, Robinson enjoys a more bounded schedule but has a deep appreciation for the tumultuous, highly activating experiences that cultivated her approach to work and life. "I've learned that you can't be drawn into every crisis. Not being consumed by the situation doesn't mean you don't care; you need humour, support, community, and self-care strategies to protect yourself so you can be of service to others."



Awards & Recognition

2024 Kinder Surprise Prize Awards

In Winter 2024, Sara Wolfe expressed her gratitude to the kind-hearted, generous, and wonderful folks in Student Services. The management team followed her lead and celebrated other staff and administration.

1. Allysa Gredling, Student Development Administrative Coordinator:

"For being a stable force at the center of the change. She exhibited grace, dedication, resilience, and so much hard work in a time of change. Thank you so much for bringing the strong and stable." — **Sara Wolfe**

2. Kaitlyn Cecchini, Student Support Receptionist:

"For being a positive person at the front of OM1631. Balancing all the things of being a working mom and still showing up smiling every day! Always a smile or kindness towards everyone. Thank you for bringing the sunshine." — **Sara Wolfe**

3. Val Jacobs, Student Support Receptionist:

"For being such a caring and kind person every day. Someone said, 'You are the most efficient person on campus.' I would add that you are the most caring and kind. Thank you for bringing the care." — **Sara Wolfe**

4. Amber Huva, SVPR Manager:

"For being so thoughtful and balancing with those around you. Over the past year, you've kindly brought soup and snacks and organized activities without asking. These are all to nurture us and show you see and care for us. Thank you for bringing the nurturing." — **Sara Wolfe**

5. Alicia Ashcroft, Writer & Storyteller:

"For tirelessly showing up with a passion for the work, student services and students every day. Beyond your day-to-day tasks, you have advocated for diverse and marginalized students by bringing their voices to the forefront; taken the lead on various committees, including the Social Engagement Committee and the Decolonization and Indigenization Committee; continuing to engage with professional development through conference presentations and pan-campus presentations; and are so incredibly passionate about the work. Thank you for bringing the passion." — **Sara Wolfe**

6. Sarah Ellis, Accessibility Services Advisor:

"For stepping out of your comfort zone and being brave. You stepped into an interim role as a Director, not knowing if it was for six months, a year or more. You showed such growth and continued to rise to the challenges. Thank you for bringing courage." — **Sara Wolfe**

7. Danelle Johnston, Open Learning Program Advisor:

"For your dedication and kindness in supporting students. Your compassion for not just students but everyone you work with does not go unnoticed. Every action you take reflects your commitment to seeing students succeed, no matter the odds or challenges they face. Whenever an issue arises, your top priority is their well-being, offering them the support and reassurance they need. This is what program advising is all about. Thank you for bringing the care." — **Matt Dyck**

8. Julie Taylor, Manager Student Experience:

"For being consistent and strong through a great time of transition. You continue to show up, get the things done and never complain. You are an incredibly reliable and kind person. Your work ethic, responsiveness and positive attitude are inspirational. Thank you for bringing the endurance." — **Sara Wolfe**

9. Emily Talerico, Assistive Technology Specialist:

"For driving change and innovation, for seeing an opportunity and providing a solution before others have realized there is a need or a way to improve. You are a consistent source of support and are always willing to lend a hand with a smile on your face. Thank you for bringing the initiative." — **Sarah Walz**

10. Chelsea Koronko, Sexualized Violence and Response Manager:

"For jumping into this new role with enthusiasm and a calming presence that makes us all feel like you have been part of this team forever. I appreciate how caring you are in the support work you do with people who have experienced sexualized violence. I also appreciate your ability to bring multiple people together to create a caring, thought-out approach. You were the missing piece of the OSA puzzle. We are so happy to have you with us." — **Cassie Greenough**

Chair Leadership Award

Nominators celebrated many of **Cliff Robinson's** contributions to the university and community. He cares deeply for others and, in multiple ways, promotes student and collegial well-being on our campus. He also collaborates and engages with a stunning array of colleagues and members of the surrounding community in numerous ways, from co-leading workshops to creating workshops or presentations for others, to simply sharing expertise and fostering a more respectful, generous workplace. Cliff encourages collaboration, but also motivates others to push off in their own direction. In all these ways and more, he fosters an inclusive, welcoming, innovative, and generous work environment.

Counsellors, in their role, support and enhance a student's potential for learning. Cliff demonstrates this at every turn, both in his own practice and as a focal point for his team, department, and beyond. A strong and generous leader in so many ways, Cliff leads with curiosity and respect for others. While he relies on scholarship and seeks the wisdom of others, it's his generosity, his sense of humour, and his own inquisitiveness that have been an inspiration.



Long-term Service Awards

15
YEARS

Karen Nichols
Student Affairs Case Manager

10
YEARS

Carly Honeyman
*Open Learning Program
Advisor - Science and Nursing*



Congrats, and hurry hard!

Learning Strategist, Athletics **Erin Pincott**, third for Team Brown, won the B.C. Women's Provincial Curling title. They defeated Victoria's Team MacMillan by a score of 10-7. The team represented B.C. at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Thunder Bay.

Writer & Storyteller wins Distinguished Service Merit Award

As an anchor within Communications, Storytelling and Events, Student Services, and the TRU community, **Alicia Ashcroft** is committed to making the campus more welcoming, supportive, and inclusive. Alicia creates new and engaging ways to raise awareness about the systemic issues that affect TRU students, including mental health, racism, misogyny, queerphobia and sexualized violence.

She developed the Student Storyteller Squad, a peer mentorship program for students to speak to their peers about what matters, and supports students in their content creation to ensure their success. She was also instrumental in bringing the first drag show to campus and making it an inclusive experience. Always looking for ways to develop personally and professionally, Alicia cares deeply about the TRU community.



Committees & Collaborations

Find Your Path programming an intersection of Counselling, CEL and Advising.

Storytellers Puneet, Ppriynaka and Reese joined Counsellor **Cliff Robinson** for a Find Your Path session, a weekly 45-minute workshop designed to help students explore their interests, values, and personality. Here, they shared feedback about the experience.

"I absolutely admire Cliff's personality and workshops. He creates such a positive and supportive environment, which is exactly what someone might need during career counseling sessions."

"Find your path is a great way to help students gain clarity about what they want and develop a stronger sense of self. Instead of feeling lost, they can focus on specific companies that align with their goals."

"The session was definitely helpful because it was an eye-opener, showing me that this is something I can pursue."

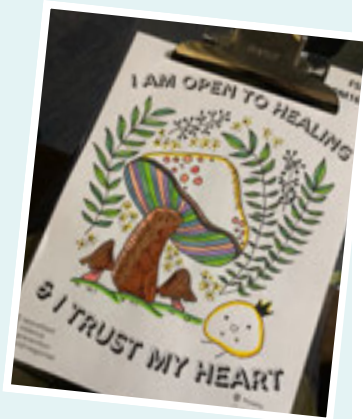


I loved participating as I love learning new things. Cliff is really a great guy. I loved how he kept it chill while also being resourceful. It was a very comfortable experience knowing that someone is there to guide you."

"This is helpful for students as many have no clue what they want to do when they graduate or what they want to pursue. I enjoyed Cliff's facilitation, he's very calm and very pleasant and he also answered every question we asked."

Nature Walks and Art-Making

Amber Huva, Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Manager, extended a department-wide invitation to join her for nature walks or creative learning. "I wanted to create opportunities to get away from my desk to brainstorm, reflect and connect while incorporating more movement into my workday. As this is part of a constructive central nervous system reset, the goal is not about speed or fitness; the pace will be determined by the number of plants we can identify on my plant app and the number of cool clouds we can see."



Holding students at the center of care

To provide a coordinated response to at-risk students requiring support from multiple services simultaneously, the CARE team comprises directors and managers from Campus Safety Services, Health and Counselling Services, Housing and Residence Life Services, Accessibility Services, Advising, Student Affairs, Indigenous Student Services, and TRU World.

Students are referred to the CARE team if there is a risk of suicide or violence or if a student has personal circumstances that require the coordination of three or more of the listed services, including other departments as needed.



We hold the student at the center of this circle of caring professionals and streamline services to reduce barriers to care. It also allows the team to watch out for struggling students. The best part about chairing the CARE team is bringing together such brilliant, creative problem solvers to help students move forward who may otherwise be stuck. I truly appreciate the team and find everyone's perspectives invaluable to my work, both on and off the CARE Team.

— Cassie Greenough

Social Engagement Committee (and other staff-centred, wellness-focused events)

• Reconnect on Campus

Back-to-School Social on August 27: This event allowed folks to gather informally before the school year started, marking a return to routine and creating chances to reconnect with people, services and spaces. This year's event took place at Cplúl'kw'ten.

• Festive Season Celebration

Staff and faculty joined this fun, informal, and introvert-friendly occasion on November 28. As per tradition, many team members wore ugly winter-themed sweaters.

• Brunch & Learn

The Decolonization and Indigenization Committee welcomed everyone to Scratch Cafe on February 5 for breakfast and a learning opportunity hosted by Rod McCormick.

- On May 1, staff gathered off-site for a full day spring **Student Services Retreat** at Hal Rogers Centre. The agenda included educational workshops facilitated by Sara Wolfe and creative play stations in the afternoon.

The Social Engagement Committee released a survey to assess these experiences and to better understand what individuals wanted for future events.

What do you value the most in a professional development event?

Connection

Flexibility

Team Building

What do you value most in a social engagement event?

Connection

Fun

Flexibility

Attendees generally enjoyed their experience at the retreat.

- "This event provided an opportunity to connect with new folks and to engage with others that I am not always able to. I was happy to have an opportunity to learn from Sara [Wolfe]; she has a fantastic sense of humor."
- "Really enjoyed the non-structured time as I connected and networked with so many coworkers in different departments I hadn't seen in a while."

Decolonization and Indigenization Committee

Monthly meetings include a welcome and check-in, a discussion about the Coyote Project Funds, and brainstorming sessions on various initiatives. In 2024-2025, the group supported funding for weekly Wellness Circles in Cplúl'kw'ten, a Counselling recovery group offered by Andrea Brassard, as well as a Brunch and Learn event with Rod McCormick.

The purpose of this working group is to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of Indigenization within and beyond the group.
- Initiate decolonization and Indigenization activities in Student Services.
- Oversee the distribution of the Coyote Project funds.

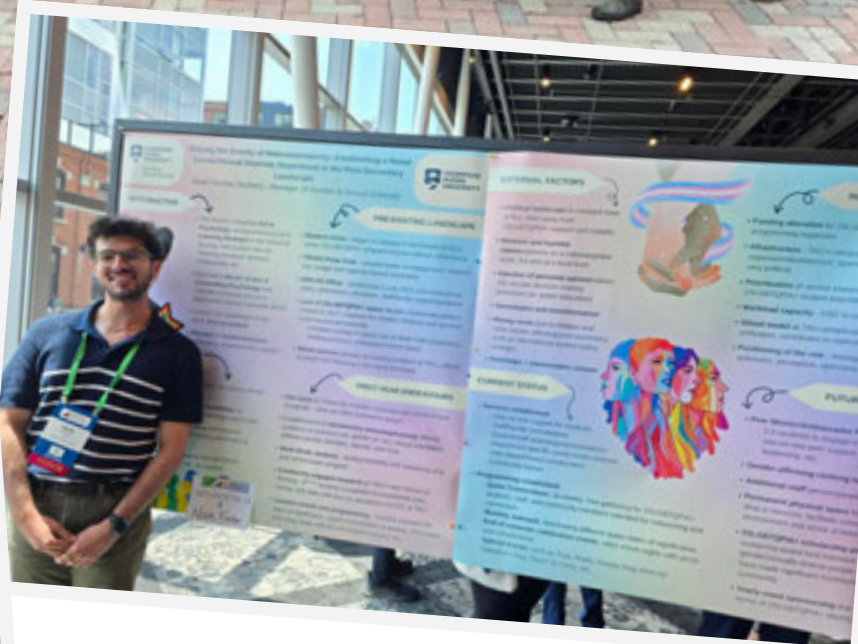
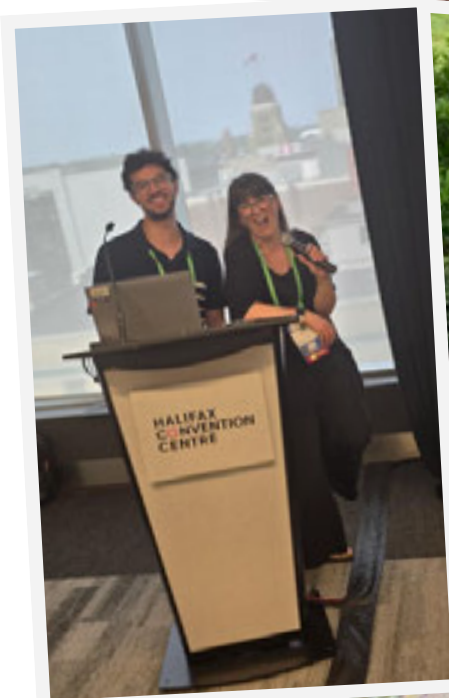
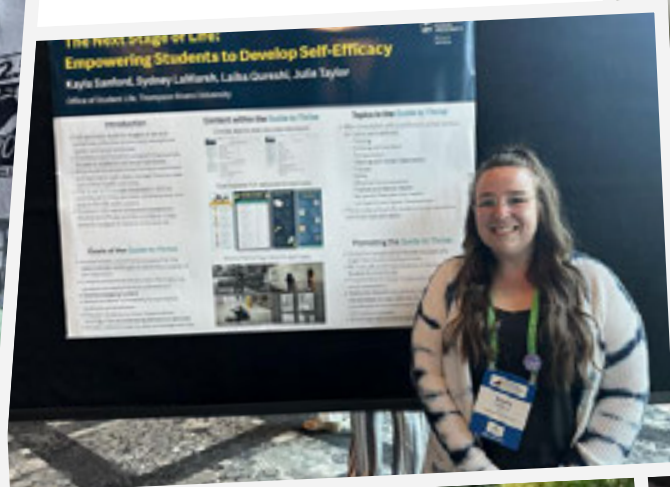


As Student Services continues to evolve and grow to meet the changing needs of students and the TRU community, it has been wonderful to get the whole Student Services team together for quarterly meetings to discuss the work we do, updates and celebrate each other. Student Services is fundamental to the student experience at TRU, and I am so grateful to work and support this team. Looking forward to the future KINDer Surprise Prizes and continuing to see how we develop together!

— Sara Wolfe

Photo Album







THOMPSON
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Student
Services

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025



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