



**University of Victoria
Sustainability Project**

University of Victoria Sustainability Project 2023-24 Annual Report

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Territory Acknowledgement

The UVSP acknowledges, with respect and gratitude, the Lekwungen-speaking Peoples on whose unceded lands and territories the University of Victoria Sustainability Project (UVSP) meets and works, and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEC peoples whose relationships with these lands and waters have existed since time immemorial and continue to this day. We also acknowledge that our membership currently consists mainly of Settler individuals who are occupying these unceded territories.

With this recognition, the UVSP centres our work in a conscious and ongoing commitment to actively decolonizing the spaces and places in which we work and the fields we engage with. We also recognize that decolonization requires individual, collective, and systemic actions, involving us all. We acknowledge that the University of Victoria is a colonial institution founded upon the establishment and perpetuation of structures of systemic racism, and the systematic oppression of marginalized people's existent within the walls of the institution, within the borders of so-called Canada, and beyond. In direct recognition of these statements, we are committed to actively contributing to decolonial action at all scales, dismantling systemic discrimination, violence, and harm that continue to oppress marginalized peoples within our institutions and this country as a whole. We assert that beyond acknowledgement, tangible action is needed. We commit to ensuring that these words are not empty by centring decolonization in all our programming and initiatives.

UVSP Team

The UVSP's staff team works under direct supervision from the UVSP Board of Directors, with a team of Coordinating Directors elected every year at the UVSP's Annual General Meeting (AGM). The UVSP's staff team is comprised of a Coordinator, a Communications Officer, one Work study position, and the UVSP Campaigns and Administration Assistant.

The UVSP Coordinator, Katia Bannister, has been in her role since 2022, working twenty (20) hours per week. The UVSP Campaigns and Administration Assistant, Lakshyata Kumari, has also been re-hired into her role since 2022.

In the Fall of 2023, the UVSP created its Communications Officer position to assist the UVSP Coordinator in carrying out the UVSP's programming. In September 2023, Bella Johnston was hired into this role at ten (10) hours per week.

In Fall 2023, the UVSP Board had thirty (30) members. The Coordinating Directors elected in the Spring of 2023 included:

- Chairs: Madisen Asante and Chloe MacGregor
- Secretaries: Linnea Hill and Liv Levert
- Treasurer: Joel Nordine
- Social Media Directors: Sarah Berton and Skye Bartel-Ens

In Spring 2024, the Communications Officer position was limited to five (5) hours a week, and Haida Davies-McDermott replaced Bella Johnston in the role. Lakshyata and Katia continued in their respective roles. In the Spring, the UVSP AGM was held, and the Board voted to add a new Coordinating Director position. The Fundraising Director(s) will help to find, strategize, write grants, etc., in collaboration with the UVSP Staff team. At the 2024 AGM, the following Coordinating Directors were elected:

- Chairs: Madisen Asante and Chloe MacGregor
- Secretaries: Linnea Hill and Jade Jazen
- Treasurer: Joel Nordine
- Fundraising Directors: Bethany Klein and Marianne Raymundo
- Social Media Directors: Sarah Berton, Abbey Heard, and Kayla Neumann



Figure 1. The UVSP Staff team: Lakshyata, Katia, and Haida

Summary & Highlights

Over the previous fiscal year, the UVSP engaged in a number of impactful activities and events centred on re-conceptualizing sustainability, as well as environmental awareness and education. In 2023, the UVSP initiated a Campus Pollinator Mapping Project, as a part of our Bee Campus Campaign. This initiative sought to identify and celebrate pollinator-friendly habitats on campus, as well as establish a baseline for future initiatives that enhance these habitats on-campus. The UVSP also re-launched its Ventures into Sustainable Recreation campaign, organizing movie screenings on environmental topics, and collaborating with the UVic Ecological Restoration Club (ERC) on invasive species removal efforts. We also continued to host Mindful Mending Workshops, encouraging the student community to engage in sustainable living practices and give old clothing and textile items new life.

In 2024, the UVSP also hosted our Environmental Roundtable event, which promotes discussions on pressing environmental issues and community connections. We also released the fourth issue of our youth art zine, Ripples, which celebrates World Water Day. Leading up to the release of Ripples, we also hosted an ‘art night’ where students could create. The UVSP also ran a successful referendum question for a fee increase, directing funds toward maintaining our current level of programming. Through these endeavours, the UVSP has made significant contributions to on-campus environmental advocacy and community engagement.

Campus Pollinator Mapping Project

As a continuation of the UVSP Bee Campus Campaign, 2023 marked the launch of the UVSP’s Campus Pollinator Mapping Project. This publicly available resource documents sites and infrastructure that are significant to pollinator species. This mapping project will help to protect, educate about, and celebrate the sites that community members share with the UVSP, allowing the sites to continue supporting

healthy pollinator populations on-campus for years to come and become a part of a much larger, interconnected network of sites in the future.

Mindful Mending Workshop

In 2023 the UVSP continued to hold Mindful Mending Workshops which seek to give students access to mending supplies and knowledge so that they can practice everyday sustainability and build community with people interested in doing the same. The UVSP ran one workshop per semester and was able to offer three stations at each: a mending station to repair old clothes, a ‘beautification station’ to upcycle clothing, and a knitting and crocheting station for students who might not have clothes to mend or upcycle but would like to do something creative or learn some new skills.

Ventures into Sustainable Recreation

The UVSP was thrilled to relaunch their Ventures into Sustainable Recreation Campaign in 2023, an initiative to get students outside and moving their bodies in-community, and to explore the intersections between stewardship, decolonization, recreation, access, and sustainability. These programs ran approximately twice a month, were open to the entire University of Victoria Undergraduate community and were frequently free of charge.

Programs in 2023/2024 included: A Leave No Trace and Safety Workshop at SNIDZĒĒ (Tod Inlet) on W̱SÁNEĆ territories, a Hike and Paint at Christmas Hill on Lekwungen territories, an Intro to Whitewater Canoeing Clinic on the Quw’utsun Sta’lo’ (Cowichan River) on Quw’utsun territories, Tandem Lakewater Canoeing Clinic near Camossung on Esquimalt territories, a Getting Around by Bike Workshop throughout Lekwungen territories, a Back-to-School Hike at W̱QEN,EL,EL (Jocelyn Hill) on W̱SÁNEĆ territories, a Botanical Beach Ecology Walk with the Community Action Bus on Pacheedaht territories, a How to use iNaturalist Workshop at Uplands Park on Lekwungen territories, and a Witty’s Lagoon Clean-up & Bird Walk on Sc’ianew territories. These programs were often facilitated by UVSP Staff, Board, or other members of the community.



Figure 2. UVSP Beach Clean-up at Witty's Lagoon



Figure 3. UVSP Tandem Lakewater Canoe Clinic

Environmental Roundtable

The UVSP Environmental Roundtable, a longstanding platform for student-led environmental initiatives, convened once again in 2024, marking over a decade of fostering community engagement and sustainable action. Held on March 28th at the Student Union Building (SUB), this year's event aimed to deepen connections between non-profit organizations, sustainable businesses, and the student body while nurturing a vision for a more environmentally conscious campus community. To achieve this goal, the UVSP invited a variety of community organizations and was thrilled to be joined by groups such as: the POLIS Project, Nūla, Found Off the Grid, the ESSA, Students for Sustainable Urban Development, and more!

Under the theme of "activating intersectional sustainability," the roundtable featured insightful presentations from Tommy Happynook, an Anthropology professor, and Yasmine Kandil & Sasha Kovacs, two Theatre professors. Their presentations delved into the complex intersections between environmental issues and various social and cultural factors, highlighting the importance of inclusive approaches to sustainability. After the speeches, tablers and community members gathered at the round tables for discussions led by four amazing facilitators. Overall, the UVSP Environmental Roundtable of 2024 served as a dynamic forum for inspiration, dialogue, and collaboration.



Figure 4. Community discussions at the Environmental Roundtable

Ripples

This year, the UVSP published a fourth edition of Ripples, an arts zine showcasing visual and written works that celebrate a shared love of, and connection to, water, created by kids and youth between the ages of six (6) and thirty (30) to celebrate World Water Day. In 2024, Ripples had thirty-seven (37) individual contributors and a seven (7) person editorial team. To encourage increased submissions the UVSP held a Ripples Art Night in collaboration with the Community Engaged Learning Office's Living and Learning with Climate Change project (LLWCC). At the event the UVSP provided varied arts supplies free of charge for community members to use and encouraged people to submit their art both to the UVSP and to LLWCC. The art night and Ripples both helped to promote conversations human connection to water and to welcome new community members into the UVSP community.

Referenda

In the Spring of 2024, the UVSP ran a successful question during the UVSS Elections and Referendum to ask for a \$0.80 increase per full-time undergraduate student per semester. The campaign was a joint effort between the UVSP Board and Staff. Campaign outreach included: social media posts, Board interviews, posters, tabling, and classroom talks. Quorum was met in the Spring 2024 Election, and the UVic Sustainability Project fee change referenda question had the highest number of affirmative votes of the four (4) questions posed rate, with 66.9% of students voting in favour of the fee increase.

Community Relationships

The UVSP shares connections and relationships with many on- and off-campus community groups through several of our major events and primary programs.

The UVSP's Bee Campus Campaign is endorsed by: the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, the UVic Campus Community Garden (CCG), the UVic Ecological Restoration Club (ERC), Curbside Farms UVic, the UVic Society of Geography Students (SOGS), the UVic Centre for Global Studies, and the UVic Birding Club. As a part of these partnerships, the UVSP has partnered with both the UVic ERC, the CCG and Curbside Farms UVic to offer engaging workshops and hands-on learning opportunities that support the objectives of our campaign: educating about, protecting, and celebrating pollinators on-campus.

The UVSP published our youth art zine for World Water Day, Ripples, with the support of NatureKidsBC and the POLIS Water Sustainability Project. Our partnerships with these groups allowed for us to engage more families in so-called BC in this initiative. They also allowed us to create deeper connections with the watershed governance research community, and for us to produce a limited edition print run of the zine. The UVSP also partnered with Community Engaged Learning (CEL) Office and the Living and Learning with Climate Change project (LLWCC) to host our on-campus art night for Ripples.

The UVSP's Ventures into Sustainable Recreation (VSR) campaign allowed our collective to build working relationships with the Community Action Bus, UVic BikeHUB, and the Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club. These relationships will continue to support robust, community-oriented, accessible, and engaging events and programs as a part of the VSR campaign.

The UVSP's second Environmental Roundtable event since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed our collective to begin building relationships with a multitude of UVic grad students, professors, and student participants, as well as door prize donors and organizations and business that came to table at the event. Bonnie Gao, Emma Street, Mary Stuart, and Adam Regier are all graduate students in UVic's Environmental Studies or Geography Departments. They volunteered to support conversation during the roundtable discussions. Drs. Yasmine Kandil, Tommy Happynook, and Sasha Kovacs all accepted invitations to come speak and inspire students at this event. In addition, Capital Bike, the UVic Environmental Studies Students' Association, the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, the Centre for Global Studies, the UVic Campus Community Garden, the Nūlla Project, and the UVic Students for Sustainable Urban Development Club all came to table at and take part in the event. A number of local businesses donated door prizes. They included: Joni, Big Wheel Burger, Level Ground Coffee, Uncouth Chocolate, Little June Cafe and Bakery, Xocolat, Mile Zero Coffee, Merridale Cidery, Goldilocks, Habit Coffee, and Boulderhouse.

By The Numbers

Over the past year, the UVSP has seen an overall increase in both the number of students engaging with our programming a single time throughout the year, as well as the number of students who are participating in our programming on a regular and consistent basis. This growth is also reflected in the the UVSP's Board of Directors. Currently, twenty-seven (27) UVic undergraduate students sit on the UVSP's Board of Directors and are actively engaged in the UVSP's operations and programming.

Demographics

The UVSP's primary demographic for engagement is full-time undergraduate students at UVic. However, our programming is also utilized by part-time students and graduate students. We also receive engagement from UVic alumni, campus neighbours, and members of the greater community of so-called Victoria. These engagement trends are relatively uniform across our programs, other than our VSR campaign events, which are targeted specifically at UVic students. Other UVSP events, like the Environmental Roundtable are designed specifically to enhance the connections between on- and off-campus environmental groups and all members of the UVic campus community.

The UVSP's current Board of Directors is primarily composed of first (1st) and third (3rd) year undergraduate students. The UVSP's Board is a diverse and interdisciplinary collective, with students studying: Environmental Studies, Political Science, Geography, Indigenous Studies, Biology, Anthropology, Climate Science, Marine Biology, Earth and Ocean Sciences, Physics, and Astronomy.

Social Media

This year, the UVSP's social media presence has continued to develop and grow with the assistance of three (3) Social Media Directors and the Staff team. The UVSP's Instagram, @uvicsustainabilityproject, has over two-thousand (2,000) followers to date and that number has increased 12.6% since the beginning of January 2024. In the Spring 2024 term the Instagram account reached 15.8k accounts which significantly contributed to event attendance and community partnerships.

In the last year, the highest individual post engagements were for, in descending order: the Environmental Roundtable (1,794), Botanical Beach Walk (1,193), Back-to-school hike (1,152), and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation & Orange Shirt Day Events (1,090). However, our Reels were the most engaging content we posted, with our Botanical Beach Recap Reel receiving over eleven-thousand (11,000) views reaching over eight thousand (8,000) accounts.

Year-to-Year

This year, engagement and interest in several of the UVSP's events and programs increased significantly. In total, the UVSP hosted around thirty (30) events for students throughout the 2023-24 school year in addition to our weekly Board meetings, which all students and community members are welcome to attend.

- For our Back-to-School Hike at WQEN,EL,EŁ (Jocelyn Hill) in January, we had about thirty (30) attendees and another thirty (30) students on the waitlist.
- For our Botanical Beach Ecology Walk in February, we had forty (40) attendees and another thirty (30) students on the waitlist.
- Our Ripples Art Night in February had its participation grow from the previous year from about thirty (30) students to about sixty (60) students.
- Our Environmental Roundtable event in March increased in attendance from around forty (40) attendees last year to around seventy-five (75).
- Our Learn to Canoe Clinics (Lakewater and Whitewater) were very limited in size to adhere to safety guidelines. The Lakewater Clinic was limited to fourteen (14) students and the Whitewater Clinic was limited to nine (9) students. Both clinics

Attendance for our Mindful Mending events, cycling-related events, and AGMs remained comparable between this year and the previous year

Challenges

In the past year, the UVSP faced growing financial struggle and concern due to our dire funding situation. These circumstances emerged due to changes to the UVSP's staff structure and because the UVSP had not run a successful referenda in twenty (20) years (i.e., since the UVSP's funding was initially established). This lack of funding also correlated to diminished staff capacity because we were unable to afford the staff hours we needed to continue to meet student demand and offer the amount of programming we had in the years prior. Additionally, having to direct staff and volunteer energy towards the passing of a successful referenda in the past two years has had a significant impact on the amount of staff capacity available to the UVSP for other programming.

The UVSP has also faced challenges by way of physical space limitations in the past year as we share a small office with the Campus Community Garden and both our staffs and communities continue to grow.

Looking Forward

Moving forward, the UVSP is excited to continue to be able to offer the programming we have in previous years with the passing of our referenda. Other than staffing costs, our budget has not changed significantly because our fee increase was less intended to dramatically increase our program offerings and more to end a multi-year period of the UVSP running at a significant deficit. However, increased funding has allowed for us to increase our Communications Officer position to ten (10) hours/week. This change to our staff structure will also result in increased support with the promotion and implementation of our programs and will help to create better program experiences for students.

The UVSP will also continue to apply for supplementary grant funding and create financial partnerships to support some of our largest event offerings, like Ripples Art Night and the Environmental Roundtable. To support this work we have elected two (2) Board members to the newly created Coordinating Director role of 'Fundraising Director'. In addition, a successful Canada Summer Jobs grant from last year will financially support hours for our Communications Officer position this coming summer, allowing for us to better plan programming for the coming year and to offer additional programming throughout the summer.

Conclusion

The past year has been an exciting time for the UVSP. In Fall 2023, we were able to create a new UVSP Communications Officer role. Our Board, programs, and program participation have continued to grow, and the passing of our Spring referenda has given us the funding needed to continue to sustain—and hopefully free up capacity to expand—our program offerings. A successful application for Canada Summer Jobs funding will also support these changes.

Our Board and staff are looking forward to hosting more Mindful Mending and Ventures into Sustainable Recreation Campaign events in the next year, as well as growing our Ripples Art Night and Environmental Roundtable events. In addition, we are looking forward to implementing new programs as they present themselves. We also look forward to continuing to grow our Board and our community connections from the relationships that have been built in the last year.