



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS PROGRESS REPORT

2022 | 2023



SUSTAINABILITY  
COMMITTEE  
BY COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES



COLLEGE OF  
THE ROCKIES

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# Introduction

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This is the first annual SDG Progress Report from the College of the Rockies (COTR), underscoring our commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this report, we offer insights into the ongoing initiatives across the College that align with the SDGs. Initiatives in this Report are grouped into 4 areas: Biosphere, Society, Economy and Partnerships. Our primary goal is to continually enhance our sustainability efforts, striving to improve our institution's role in addressing global challenges and fostering a more sustainable future. This report was commissioned by the College's Sustainability Committee and was created by Faculty Member, Becky Pelkonen, with support from BBA Capstone student, Tanya Nadeau and ENST 200 (Environmental Sustainability) students in 2022 and 2023.

Sustainability and sustainable development are key concepts of our time. The 1987 UN report *Our Common Future*, defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition also encompasses interconnected pillars and goals wherein when one pillar weakens, the entire structure of sustainability risks collapse thus demonstrating the need to approach sustainability from a lens of interconnectedness.



Addressing today's pressing global challenges, such as those outlined in the SDGs, requires demonstrating sustainability in practice. This is a complex, long-term effort demanding resilience, holistic thinking, big conversations and courage. Everyone must participate in this collective endeavor by answering the question: *What actions can we take to contribute to sustainability and create a brighter future, whether locally in our region or globally?* The answer lies in **adopting a sustainable mindset, a culture of continuous improvement and integrating it as a way of life.**

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in driving societal change and are uniquely positioned to lead this change. As incubators of future leaders and responsible citizens, Colleges such as ours hold the responsibility of fostering environmental stewardship and awareness. COTR is pursuing this leadership role by documenting our actions, planning for improvement and integrating the SDGs into its College-wide Strategic Plan, where sustainability, reconciliation and leveraging diversity form key pillars.

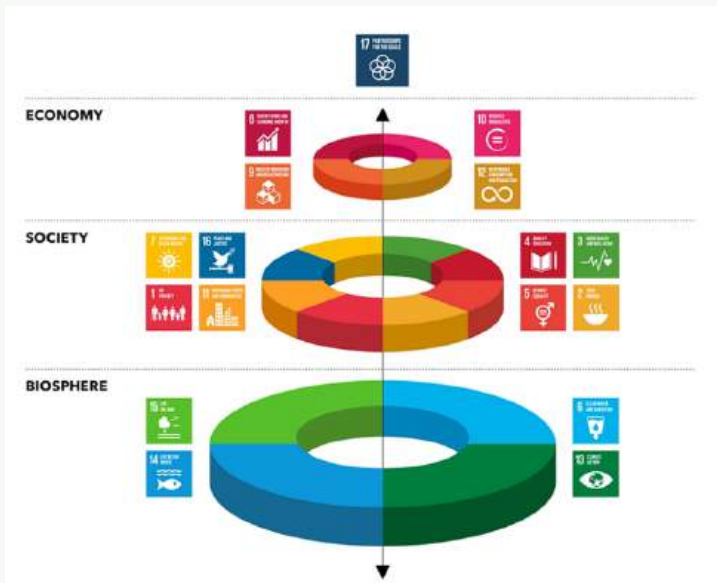
## Our Approach

COTR's efforts in compiling this Report aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and were categorized into four key areas, using the *Stockholm Resilience Centre's (2016) SDG Wedding Cake Model*. Various methods were used to collect this data including student-led approaches using desktop research and interviews with internal and external experts. A comprehensive review of other plans within the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and interviews with global collaborators such as the University of Andorra and the University of Iceland led us to this first approach wherein sustainability efforts were documented and a set of actions have been determined for continuous improvement.

The reports and lists here have limitations in that they are not exhaustive but are meant to be built upon with continued research lead by the Sustainability Committee with College-wide conversations and engagement being held annually.







*This Report is categorized into four key areas, using the Stockholm Resilience Centre's (2016) SDG Wedding Cake Model: Biosphere, Society, Economy and Partnerships.*

To gather quantitative data, we received support from COTR's Facilities team. Information regarding the environmental performance of COTR's operations (i.e. waste, electricity, water usage, and carbon emissions), came from the reporting this team does through the STARS (Sustainability Tracking and Reporting System) Program and for the Provincially mandated Public Sector Organization (PSO) Climate Change Accountability Report.

## Sustainability in Applied Research, Teaching & Learning

Academic freedom and innovation are promoted and supported through many vehicles at the College, in particular through our Centre of Innovation, Teaching and Learning (CITL), our Research ethics Board (REB) and the work of Dr. Paul Tiede, Manager of Applied Research & Innovation. Stephanie Wells, Dean of Business, University Arts & Sciences also discusses the work that academic programs do to foster the implementation of sustainability in teaching and learning in several ways: "It is crucial that we address and communicate the urgency in achieving the global goals within our curriculum, academic programs, and student engagement. Through faculty course reviews and program updates we create space for dialogue on ways to

incorporate the most relevant SDG goals that meet course outcomes and scaffold through to the completion of a credential.” She continues, “The College contributes to sustainable communities through community partnerships in applied research projects, particularly the research of 4th year Capstone students in our BBA in Sustainable Business Practices. Students and community work together solving a real-world organizational challenge resulting in the student’s contribution to a body of local knowledge that makes an impact.”

COTR takes ethical responsibility regarding the subjects of research, and takes into consideration the viewpoints of the environment, nature and society as a whole regarding projects, discussions and policy-making. Recent topics in applied research include helping companies achieve lower waste and emissions targets, circular economy and local food production, and an upcoming project leveraging local social enterprises to develop student expertise in local food production and strengthening food supply resilience through Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities. Further, instructors across all programs including trades, vocational and academic programs are supported through CITL to incorporate high impact practices (HIPs) and work-integrated learning through professional development time annually.

Distance learning, Indigenous and Ktunaxa partnerships, international collaboration, knowledge-sharing and improved technologies all support in increasing quality, improving equitable access and supports with the development of teaching and learning in a positive way. The work of both CITL and the Sustainability Committee are foundational in supporting to further these actions and cultivate a College-wide culture in sustainable thinking.



# Message from President & CEO, Paul Vogt

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*This SDG Progress Report highlights our steadfast commitment to sustainability and reflects our continuous efforts to grow as a more responsible institution.*

The College of the Rockies is pleased to present its first-ever Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report that builds on the successful efforts of the College’s Sustainability Committee. We are proud to continue showcase our dedication to sustainability from a systems thinking approach.

In September, 2024 the College signed onto the SDG Accord, a global initiative designed to encourage the education sector to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a voluntary commitment demonstrates our commitment to support sustainability initiatives into our operations, curriculum, and broader activities with our community and regional partners.

With the launch of our Strategic Plan “Forward and Upward” (2024) we will ground our actions in a commitment to fostering truth and reconciliation, while championing diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

This SDG Progress Report highlights our steadfast commitment to sustainability and reflects our continuous efforts to grow as a more responsible institution. By working together, we can ensure a brighter future, with the College of the Rockies at the forefront of advancing sustainability in all areas. Join us in setting a positive example for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Vogt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Biosphere

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## Water Bottle Filling Stations

Our Facilities Department have installed “Water Bottle Filling Station” throughout Kootenay Centre at our Cranbrook Campus. These machines dispense chilled, filtered water into reusable water bottles. Our goal is to reduce the amount of plastic waste created through purchased water. With that in mind, we have now also phased out of water in the Kootenay Centre vending machines altogether.

## Lights Out Campaign

The Lights Out concept has been applied to all our computer labs. Screensavers still use power. We encourage all computer users to please shut computers down completely. Shutting down not only saves energy, but it also provides a fresh boot-up for next time.

## LEED Certified

The south entrance expansion, completed in 2010, achieved certification by the Leadership in Energy in Environmental Design (LEED) certification program, indicating the new construction meets the highest environmental performance criteria in Canada.

## Recycling Stations

Blue recycling bins are placed throughout our campuses. A complete recycling center is also located at the east side of the main parking lot at the Cranbrook Campus wherein the College Community can deposit cans, newspaper, paper, glass and milk jugs.

## Creating a “Sense of Place” - Native Plants & Ktunaxa Plant Names Garden

In partnership with the Ktunaxa Nation, COTR developed a native plants garden outside of the main campus as a space for education and well-being. The native plants have nameplates demonstrating their Ktunaxa names, and latin names. This showcase can offer numerous benefits, including supporting local biodiversity and supporting with helping preserve regional ecosystems.

## Solar PV Installation Course

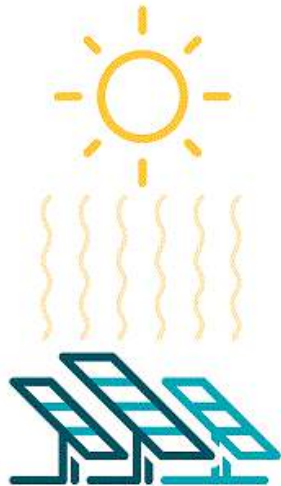
A five-day course was held in 2023, aimed at tradespeople and home or business owners. This training was held for the general public, electricians and tradespeople.



# SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION



## SOLAR ENERGY



Cranbrook campus' residence building utilizes two types of solar technology on the facility's roof - photovoltaic and solar thermal - which allows the system to pull in as much heat as possible.

The College also installed photovoltaic panels on the roof of the Cranbrook campus' Kootenay Centre building which was determined to be the biggest consumer of electricity and had the best physical space for the solar panels.

### THE KOOTENAY CENTRE SOLAR PROJECT PRODUCES 109,000 KILOWATT-HOURS PER YEAR OF ELECTRICITY,

enough to operate 14 houses for a year - while reducing the College's greenhouse gas emissions by 12,000 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent). Combined, the solar systems have saved 26 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from entering the atmosphere.

## Monitored mechanical systems

Fluctuations from thermostats lose lots of heat therefore the College monitors mechanical systems (heating and cooling) and maintain sustainable baselines electronically. "The Facilities team can see systems not working efficiently to solve these quickly to save money and in turn the environment as well." (Allan Knibbs, 2023)

## Idle-free zones in parking lots

Idle-free zones are designated at all primary parking lots. These zones reduce air pollution by minimizing vehicle emissions, improve public health by decreasing exposure to harmful pollutants. They also help combat climate change by cutting down carbon emissions, and promote environmental awareness.

## Collection of bikes ready for bike-sharing program

A collection of well-maintained, quality bicycles have been stored and are ready for bike-sharing programs. Bikes have been donated and/or left behind in residence and are planned to be repurposed. A BBA Capstone student worked on an operational strategy wherein these bicycles can be available to rent to the College Community for recreational and commuting purposes.

## Community Forest Management & Trail Enhancement

COTR “owns” and manages 20 hectares of Community Forest. In 2022, a project was implemented to rejuvenate multi-use trails impacted by student housing construction through the COTR Cranbrook Community Forest Trail Enhancement project. In collaboration with the Cranbrook Community Forest Society and other relevant stakeholders, the College conceptualized new sections of trail and improvements to existing trails near the College’s track and Student Housing buildings.

Inclusivity and quality were key principles of the trail design. Highlights of the renovation included a designated College trailhead with improved signage, a bike wash station, rejuvenated multi-use up-track, and a mountain bike flow trail with berms, technical features, and ride-around options, built to Whistler Trail Standards.

## Rain Capture & Native Plants at Patterson Hall

·With the help of students and faculty, ideas such as rain capture and restoring small wetland areas behind Patterson Hall are taking place. There is a new rain barrel used to collect and reuse drain and rainwater that is of benefit to both wildlife and plants.

## New Buildings to be “net-zero energy ready”

All new construction at the College is now mandated to meet provincial environmental standards. The new student housing village that was constructed in 2021 meets Step 5 of the BC Energy Step Code requirements, representing “net-zero energy ready”, the standard met by the most energy-efficient projects developed today.

*“With the completion of our latest student housing project, we were committed to rejuvenating surrounding multi-use trails on College land,” said Allan Knibbs, Director, Facilities. “We’re thrilled to see this project coming to a close and hope community members and visitors to our region enjoy the new and improved trails this summer and into the future.”*



## EV Charging Stations

In 2021, new two-vehicle electric vehicle charging stations were installed. According to a 2019 Clean Energy Canada survey, 64 per cent of Canadians would like to see a shift to having most vehicles on the roads be electric. The new charging station is located in the parking lot adjacent to the Gathering Place at the College’s main campus.

## The Living Lab Research Project

In 2022/2023, COTR became part of a national research program aiming to encourage post-secondary institutions to become leaders for climate action through innovation. With the support of Colleges & Institutes Canada, College of the Rockies conducted a campus-wide research project to increase awareness and promote behavioural change to reduce greenhouse gases emissions during the 2022/2023 academic year.

The Living Lab Research Project aimed to reduce the campus carbon footprint using a circular economy approach. As a continuity of the Composting Project, the project aimed to increase the amount of organic waste composted on campus. The compost produced was used to grow food on-site, that was then consumed in the cafeteria and through the Professional Cook program. The team launched different educational campaigns to support behavioural change in students and employees including use of the newly installed composting bins, compost best practices, and GHG footprints.

This large-scale demonstration reduced both volume and transportation distance of waste to the landfill. It encouraged circular food production and conscious consumption. The project replaced imported lettuce in the Cafeteria with greens grown right on campus. All these actions led to a decrease in the College of the Rockies' production of greenhouse gases.







## BIOSPHERE: Opportunities for Action



This 2023/2023 Progress Report supported with the engagement of the College Community during SDG Week in March, 2024. During that week, the following BIOSPHERE Opportunities for Action were identified:

- Measure and **take active steps to limit printing** and utilizing the photocopy machine by **incorporating more digital resources**.
- Identify methods to **sustain the Living Lab project** and incorporate more **circular economy** and local foods within the Cafeteria.
- Actively promote more **meatless and low-carbon/ethical catering**. Promote and implement “Meatless Mondays” in the Cafeteria.
- **Measure water use** on College lawns and actively work towards reducing water consumption and landscaping in a way to promote greater biodiversity.
- Internationalization and global education is considered an important part of a rich student experience. Mandate the **purchasing of carbon offsets** for all international and regional travel.
- Prioritize support for **maintaining, updating and utilizing the Native Plant Garden** as an active teaching resource and space for learning and well-being.



# Society

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## Financial Aid and Awards

COTR's Financial Aid and Awards Office manages a number of entrance and ongoing scholarships and awards for students of all programs, needs and abilities. The office also supports students with identifying solutions in times of extreme need.

## Employment Services & On-Campus Student Job Opportunities

Through the "Student Opportunities Fund," the College offers various on-campus student jobs including in the cafeteria, cleaning, lab support, and other unique opportunities. The Employment Services Team supports students with resume-writing, interview skills and matching seekers with opportunities through the new Opportunity Portal. There are numerous online resources to help students navigate their career. Services are available to all COTR students and alumni.

## Health & Dental Insurance

The Students' Association, College of the Rockies Faculty Association and CUPE work alongside COTR to provide comprehensive health and dental insurance for all employees and students at the College.



## Co-Curricular Record

In 2023, the Co-Curricular Record was launched wherein students, through the Opportunity Portal can upload and cultivate an online platform to showcase their non-academic activities. Participating in co-curricular activities fosters the development of student skills and contributes to personal growth, ultimately preparing students for future employment opportunities or educational pursuits.



## Campus Health & Well-being Framework

A Strategic Plan for the College to become a health-promoting post-secondary institution has been completed, including a Campus Health and Wellbeing Framework, adopting Canadian National Standards, the Okanagan Charter, and the International Charter.

## Mental Health & Wellness Workshops, Counselling and Crisis Support for Employees & Students

To support students' mental health and wellbeing, the College offers online chat rooms, crisis lines, and counseling services. These resources are offered without charge and are designed to give students the assistance and direction they require. For employees, there are a number of free benefits through the College's wellness plan along with numerous free workshops and activities through this plan and the Health & Wellness Committee.

## Communicable Disease Prevention

COTR offers resources and information on preventing communicable diseases, such as COVID-19 resources and advice for the cold and flu season. Vaccine clinics are also available to the College Community with support provided by Interior Health and COTR's Nursing Programs. Sanitizing stations continue to be maintained and masks were available in 2022 around all campus facilities to help support the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.

## Campus Life, Drop-in Activities & Gym Facilities

COTR's Student Life and Athletics team is dedicated to enhancing the employee and student experience by offering a wide variety of drop-in activities and yoga classes. Cross-country ski and snowshoe rentals are also available for the winter months.



## Learning Commons Improvements & New Flexible Learning Lab

2022 was the beginning of significant renovations to the Library, now known as the Learning Commons. Under the leadership of Dr. Shaun Longstreet Dean Innovation, Teaching, and Learning new resources were purchased and students have access to several private and group study spaces, equipment, and computers.

A former underutilized computer lab was re-envisioned as a Flexible Learning Lab with mobile, flexible learning configurations, new interactive technologies and better opportunities for experiential learning. The Flexible Learning space is open to all programs and may be booked by faculty looking to elevate classroom learning sessions.

## Nursing Students Presented on Learning Innovations at a National Conference

Year 4 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students, Natalie Armstrong and Jessica Wheeler, traveled to St. John's, Newfoundland to present their work and learning experience with the Community Outreach Practicum project at the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) Conference. The practicum project at College of the Rockies had a dual focus. First, to provide student nurses with learning experience in the role of community health nursing, and second, to build a practicum opportunity for students to respond to the health needs of our community.

## Spring Dental Clinic

Through the Dental Assistance Program, a Spring Preventative Clinic is run that sees over 200 patients each year, providing students with hands-on experience. Many clients who come to the clinic are long-term repeat customers who have access to screenings and cleanings at a greatly reduced cost.

## Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Committee

An active Committee was established comprised of employees passionate about creating an inclusive, respectful, and safe campus that is free from all forms of sexualized violence.

## New Simulation Technology for Nursing Students

A new birthing simulator was purchased in 2022 with support from Columbia Basin Trust. The simulator, a birthing manikin fondly named "Noelle", will help students practice real life birthing situations. "Noelle is a valuable learning tool for our students," said Norma Sherret, Dean, Health and Human Services. "Using this high-fidelity simulator, faculty can develop real-life scenarios to promote effective learning experiences for our students related to pregnancy and childbirth."



## STEAM Program for Children

The College runs a program for children ages 7-12 in March and July every year. The STEAM program features an ever-changing menu of engaging, educational and curriculum-aligned week-long camps in science, technology, engineering, art and math. The College provides fee-relief to ensure as many children can benefit from this program as possible.

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**200+**

*The number of community-based clients the Dental Assistance Program sees annually in their Preventative Clinic, many of whom access the screenings and cleanings at a greatly reduced cost.*

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## President’s Taskforce on Equity, Diversity, Indigenization, Inclusion & Belonging

In 2022, President Paul Vogt established the College’s first task force on EDIIB in response to his commitment renewal to cultivating a culture of inclusion, in which all students and employees feel safe and respected for who they are; a place where people feel part of the College community and can be their authentic selves. The EDIIB Task Force is charged by the College President to embark on a three-year effort to work on institutional change so that “Small College Proud” includes pride in our ability to “transform and enrich communities through the power of education” regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and gender identity, sexuality, age, physical ability, neurodiversity, religion, immigration status or national origin, or any other protected characteristic as per the BC Human Rights Code.

### Pathways into Indigenization

Dana Wesley (ED, Indigenous Strategy & reconciliation) and Dr. Shaun Longstreet (Dean, Innovation Teaching & Learning) created a resource to guide the College in efforts towards Indigenization and Reconciliation. This resource is called, Pathways into Indigenization which provides five entry points into doing this important work. The Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning has accompanying online resources that support the exploration of each of the pathways for employees wishing to implement Indigenization strategies into their services and teaching practices. In Indigenous Education, the Indigenous Academic Advisor/Coordinator can also assist employees wishing to deepen their understanding of the pathways.

### Dialogues with Indigenous Peoples & “Getting Story Ready”

In 2022, the “Dialogues with Indigenous Peoples” Program was launched with numerous opportunities for students, faculty and full classes to engage directly with Ktunaxa Knowledge Holders and multi-disciplinary Indigenous scholars. All participants were lead through a “Getting Story Ready” initiative to ensure cultural safety and cultivate a culture of respect and reciprocity when engaging with Knowledge Holders and Scholars.



## Pride Club & New Rainbow Stairway

COTR embraces and supports members of 2SLGBTQIA+ community and values the diverse sexual and gender identities and expressions that make up our community. We believe everybody is entitled to feel safe and respected on campus and have free and equal access to everything offered at the College. We were excited by the creation of a Pride Club and wholeheartedly support the work they are doing.

In 2023, the COTR Pride Club was revived by students who were interested in creating a safe space for themselves and others while recognizing the need for representation for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals on the campus. One of the most visible results of the work they are doing are the rainbow stairs leading into the College's entrance by the cafeteria. Those steps are a reminder to all of the importance of tolerance and allyship.



## Student Clubs



Through the Students' Association, funding is available for student-led clubs, trips, social justice and activities. Student clubs are a keystone in socialization and making connections outside of class in post-secondary education and helps promote good emotional well-being for students.

## Criminal & Social Justice Program Field Trip to Lethbridge for experiential learning

The Criminal & Social Justice (CSJ) Program continues to facilitate experiential learning with an annual trip to Lethbridge to experience learning with the RCMP and Lethbridge Correctional Centre. This opportunity is primarily offered to students in CRIM 131- Intro to the Criminal Justice System class, a second semester course for the CSJ programs and also an elective for many other programs. Approximately 20 students travel to Lethbridge together with the first stop at Lethbridge police services where students interact and engage with all the various departments and services available in the detachments. Following this, the group travels to the Lethbridge Correctional Centre where students enter the prison and tour the facility and all its departments. This field trip is an impactful cohort-building and learning activity as it is interactive and connects students directly to the real-world experiences and impacts of social and criminal justice.



## Celebrating International Student Cultures

COTR often hosts days to celebrate and learn about international students' cultures. For example, in 2022 and 2023, there were College-supported events for Holi and Diwali which is a Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Newar Buddhist festival of lights. There are also international student services offered, along with International Education Week events.



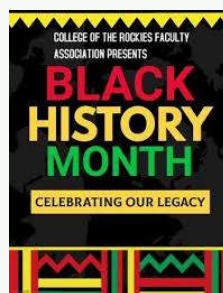
## Orange Shirt Day & Indigenous History Month

Orange Shirt Day is honored through all campuses in recognition of the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation in September each year. Indigenous History Month was recognized in June of 2023 with Ktunaxa speakers Bonnie Harvey and Kathryn Teneese.



## Black History Month

Black History Month (BHM) is observed across Canada every February, providing an opportunity to share and learn about the experiences, contributions and achievements of peoples of African, Caribbean, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Indigenous ancestry across Canada and beyond. BHM celebrations and learning events have been led by CORFA, with funding support from COTR, CUPE and the Students' Association. Michelle Chan, now BBA Alumni, has been instrumental over the past 3 years in developing programming and mentorship to continue a strong legacy for belonging, representation and celebration of, and for, black students and Community Members.



## Conflict Resolution, Mediation & Legal Support Services

In order to support staff and students in finding amicable and productive solutions to disputes, COTR provides mediation services, workshops on conflict resolution, and counselling. In addition, the COTR offers specialized coursework through its Criminal and Social Justice Program. To help students with specific legal concerns, provisions may also be made for legal advice and support services. This could entail forming alliances with attorneys or offering tools and information to help students navigate.



## yaqakiᑭ ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ “The Place Where People Gather”

yaqakiᑭ ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ is considered a safe haven where students, staff, faculty, and community members feel welcome, respected and engaged. Respect is the underlying principle of the yaqakiᑭ ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ and all scheduled activities must celebrate diversity, inclusiveness and Indigenous knowledge. The building lies at the edge of the Cranbrook Community Forest, is on Ktunaxa Territory and is surrounded by native medicinal plants.

Both the upper and lower levels offer unique opportunities for student, staff, faculty and community engagement. Indigenous community organizations are welcome to book the upstairs of yaqakiᑭ ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ.

## MOU with Ktunaxa Nation & Signatories to Indigenous Education Protocol (IEP)

According to Colleges & Institutions Canada (CICan), “Colleges and Institutes are key providers of applied postsecondary education for Indigenous communities across Canada. COTR recognizes its role in creating opportunities for students to feel supported, safe, and included in curriculum, classrooms, and student life. COTR has signed onto the CICan Indigenous Education Protocol and is working towards actionable steps as guided by its MOU with the Ktunaxa Nation Council that recognizes that “Healing, inclusion and reconciliation begins with commitment, collaboration and respect for the past.”

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### **COTR Statement of Truth & Reconciliation**

*As an institution and a community, College of the Rockies recognizes that we reside, work, and learn on the unceded traditional territories of Indigenous peoples who have been caretakers of these lands and waterways since time immemorial. We also recognize the complex, storied, and problematic history of these lands and its lasting impacts on education, including systemic anti-Indigenous racism, Residential Schools, and the assimilationist agendas of past Provincial and Federal governments.*

*The College acknowledges this history and the necessity for Truth and Reconciliation. Reconciliation is an on-going process and revealing truth is a vital component of reconciliation. The College is committed to continuously working towards amplifying the truths shared by Indigenous communities through decolonizing curricula, Indigenous our campuses, and working shoulder to shoulder with Indigenous partners. This journey requires meaningful engagement, reciprocal relationships, and for every member of the College to hold ourselves accountable as we work together to make positive change.*



## SOCIETY: Opportunities for Action



This 2023/2023 Progress Report supported with the engagement of the College Community during SDG Week in March, 2024. During that week, the following SOCIETY Opportunities for Action were identified:

- Implementing cost-saving measures such as providing **free or low-cost textbooks and learning materials** can significantly ease the financial burden on students. The OpenStax initiative (n.d.), as an example, offers free, peer-reviewed, openly-licensed texts, providing an example of accessible resources.
- Introduce **financial literacy courses and programs** that teach students about budgeting, financial planning, and smart money management which can empower them to navigate their finances effectively.
- Students are overwhelmingly requesting active engagement to **increase and further develop scholarship and bursary opportunities** and to be more inclusive of offering scholarships for international students.
- Work with external organization and/or conduct internal applied research to **identify methods for improving food security for students**, specifically through food pantry initiatives, lower food costs on-campus, and other practices.
- In recognition of the additional labour Indigenous students and scholars undertake in colonial settings, **develop meaningful and actionable institutionalized support systems for Ktunaxa and Indigenous scholars and students that are informed by Ktunaxa and Indigenous scholars and students.**
- Expand resources and information about **Truth and Reconciliation and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**, as these movements cannot gain traction without proper understanding from the public about why it is an issue.



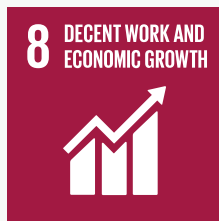
## SOCIETY: Opportunities for Action continued...



- Integrate **Universal Design for Learning** practices throughout all learning contexts to support a variety of learning needs.
- **Develop transparent decision-making platforms and set Key Performance Indicators with measurement strategies.** One example may be to implement an online portal or forum allowing students, faculty, and staff to engage in decision-making processes. This platform could facilitate discussions, collect feedback, and inform stakeholders about ongoing decisions. Arizona State University's ASU Ideas platform provides a space for open discussions and idea sharing, fostering transparency and inclusivity in governance (ASU Ideas).
- **Offer ongoing diversity and inclusion training** for students, faculty, and staff to promote understanding, respect, and inclusion. The training can cover cultural competence, bias awareness, and inclusive practices.
- **Expand campus safety programs** by implementing a comprehensive safety plan, increasing security measures, and providing safety awareness campaigns, workshops, and emergency preparedness training.
- **Develop and expand service-learning programs linking academic studies with community engagement and a culture of volunteerism and civic pride.** In particular, actively pursue community-based partnerships for applied research and BBA Capstone projects, developing a number of projects students can specifically engage in.
- Develop a schedule of **inclusive and culturally-appropriate celebrations** for every represented culture within the College community to create a greater spirit of belonging for newcomers and international students.
- Develop a **process for complaints that is trauma-informed** and safe for all, specifically in circumstances involving racism and/or discrimination.

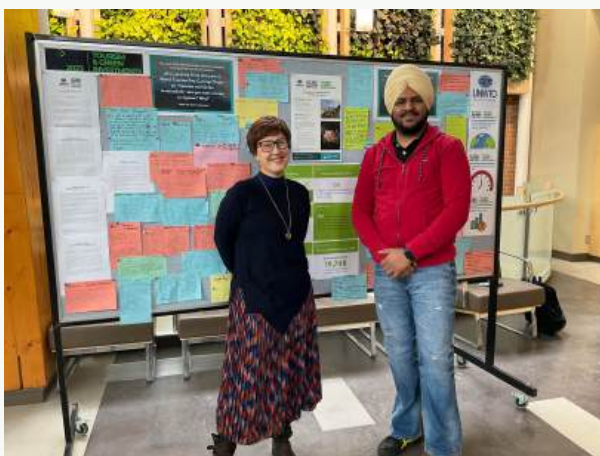
# ECONOMY

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## World Tourism Day - Green Investments

The Tourism Management Department hosted World Tourism Day for the 2nd year at the Cranbrook main campus on September 28, 2023. A panel of speakers and a networking event on 'Tourism and Green Investments' was held with 1st and 2nd year students, the general public and industry partners. Kootenay Rockies Tourism, Cranbrook Tourism, the City of Cranbrook, Tristen Chernove with Elevate Airports Inc., Craig Campbell and Marty Williams with Paqam Community Enterprises, and COTR students were all speakers at the event.



## Kootenay Entrepreneurship Program

This two-day event unfolded simultaneously at the COTR Cranbrook campus and Selkirk College Castlegar campus, offering immersive experiences for students eager to explore the world of entrepreneurship. The Program is specially crafted for students with aspirations of launching their own businesses in the future, providing them with invaluable insights and knowledge, even if they have no prior business background.

### Idea Lab

This makerspace is now open to students and employees to make use of our 3D printers, scanners and CNC laser, assorted electronics test equipment and associated software for free either to complement structured class learning or as a creative outlet.

### KORE Summit

Through the "Kootenay Entrepreneurship Program", COTR sponsored 5 students to attend and meet with mentors in special small-group settings at this unique conference and networking event featuring inventors in the outdoor recreation industry.

## Bachelor of Business Administration 4-Year Degree Program in Sustainable Business Practices

COTR has a sustainability-focused BBA Program that 12 COTR Diploma Programs ladder directly into. This Program realizes that sustainability is the benchmark for businesses in the 21st century and can prepare students for this new business environment. The BBA in Sustainable Business Practices is also designed to specifically integrate the SDGs.

## CPA Event: How to become an accountant in the Kootenays

In collaboration with CPA BC, the Business Department held its first networking event in March, 2023 that was open for prospective students, current students, alumni, interested members of the public, and current CPAs. Information was provided about the College's Accounting and other business programs, including an introduction from a CPA Recruitment Officer, and a panel of students and CPAs together.



## Western Canadian Business Competition

COTR prepares a team every year for the Western Canadian Business Competition. In 2023, it was held at Douglas College. The team won Top Strategic Plan and 2nd Place overall in the Junior Division. COTR students consistently score high in this Competition and teams are made up of a multi-disciplinary business students.



## Cranbrook Chamber of Commerce Networking Events

Business students at the College have been given an exciting new opportunity thanks to Work-Integrated Learning Funding and the Cranbrook Chamber. Work-Integrated Learning funding is used to sponsor student attendance at Cranbrook business events such as luncheons and the annual Business Excellence Awards. The opportunity also prepares students with resources to develop networking skills and nurture valuable relationships within the local business community.



## Multi-disciplinary Mountain Sustainability Field School in Andorra

In 2022 and 2023, 17 students from diverse programs including Tourism Management, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, University General Studies, Business, and Environmental Science completed a hands-on learning experience in the Principality of Andorra. “The field school took place in one of the most unique countries on Earth – the microstate of Andorra, which rests high in the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain,” said Brinkert. “With Andorra serving as a living laboratory, our students were able to compare and contrast mountain sustainability issues that we face at home with those found in mountain societies in Europe.” This learning opportunity features a five-day alpine trek through protected and mountainous areas that feature intensive human activities.



## Geneva Global Health Field Trip (BSN Program)

BSN students complement classroom learning by visiting and interacting with representatives of institutions in Geneva that are central to various global health issues. This optional one-week field trip held during reading break enables further exploration of topics covered in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, including the global health care actors, health care in conflict and post-conflict situations, and nurses as global citizens.

## Young Africa Works & Youth Empowerment in Kenya

COTR has partnered with the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and Lakeland College in a project covering youth empowerment in Africa. The Young Africa Works in Kenya – Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project seeks to empower the youth with employable skills in Kenya with a particular focus on young women. Funds of up to \$ 1.8 million have been dedicated to the project to support four educational institutions in the Northern Rift Valley of Kenya. The four institutions to receive this support between 2021 and 2024 are Baringo Technical College, Lodwar Vocational Training Centre, Kitale National Polytechnic and Eldoret National Polytechnic. The Young Africa Works initiative aims to strengthen Kenya’s big four sectors namely: Food Security, Housing, Health, and Manufacturing. A paradigm shift in the four sectors would trigger a drive towards the attainment of other SDG goals such as Zero Hunger (Goal 2), Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6) and Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (Goal 9).

## New Access Road

A new access road is being developed on the North side of the COTR Cranbrook campus. This road supports accessibility, safety, transport, and inclusivity at the College as it will be used as another access and exit for the campus with less traffic congestion which will support hosting bigger community events. Planning for this road has taken into consideration biodiversity and wildlife connectivity issues, wherever possible.



## East Kootenay Career & Job Fair

The East Kootenay Career and Job Fair is a collaboration between College of the Rockies, Kootenay Employment Services (KES) and WorkBC, taking place in early March, 2023. Representatives from local and provincial companies, agencies and professional associations were available.

All vendors at the Career and Job Fair were also provided with resources to support inclusive hiring practices and were offered a chance to identify themselves as inclusive employers.

## New Student Housing with Purcell House

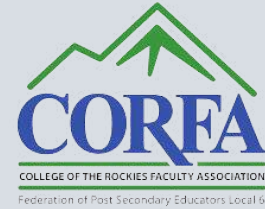
More than twice the number of students at the College of the Rockies now call campus home with the addition of 100 new student beds at the Cranbrook campus in 2021 and 2022. The new student housing includes five cottage-style buildings with an outdoor classroom and social space. The housing expansion increases the amount of student beds from 96 to 196 at the College's Cranbrook campus, including four fully accessible units (16 beds) for students with mobility challenges.

The energy-efficient project was consistent with elements of the CleanBC plan to design more sustainable, energy-efficient buildings. The buildings achieved Step 5 of the BC Energy Step Code and met the design and construction standards to earn Passive House International (Low Energy Building) Certification. The five new buildings are collectively referred to as ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ that translates to "village" in the Ktunaxa language.



## “Decent work for all” promoted through Employee-Management Labour Agreements

According to students in ENST 200 (2023): “When it comes to decent work for all, unions play an important role. Simply by having employment unions such as CORFA and CUPE, studies have shown that wages will naturally increase over time at more acceptable rates and greater benefits should also be seen as a result.” Labour agreements and ongoing labour-management relations meetings are set regularly to ensure that as a collective work force, all union members are being treated with fairness. Both CORFA and CUPE at COTR hold regular social gatherings and work together for student success.



## UPASS through the Students' Association

The UPASS (Universal Bus Pass) gives COTR students access to all City of Cranbrook bus routes as well as an on-demand shuttle service for students taking evening classes. The on-demand shuttle service runs Monday to Friday beginning at 7:00pm with the last bus leaving at 9:15pm. The shuttle takes students directly to their home anywhere within the city limits.

The UPASS also includes free access to public swim times at Western Financial Place in Cranbrook.

## Women in Trades Scholarships & Women-specific Bursaries

COTR offers bursaries specifically to female students, for example, the Adele Thompson Memorial Bursary for Kinesiology or University studies students. A Women in Trades scholarship is also available, to promote equal access to women in those job sectors that were traditionally perceived as predominantly for men.



## Work-Integrated Learning

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) became a key focus of the College's Strategic Plan in 2023 with actionable initiatives in Apprenticeship, Co-op Education, Practicum placements, and special WIL programs and projects within academic and vocational classrooms. Work-integrated learning is a broad term for education that combines learning and practical work experience and is a partnership benefiting the student and employer.



16

Programs now have Co-op as an option within their Diploma or Degree pathways

45+

Students in the Hospitality Management Program and others have completed a Diploma or Degree with Co-op Option in the last 2 years.

90%

Of co-op grads have been found to secure employment in their field shortly after graduation, compared to lower rates for non-co-op students (SFU, 2023).



## ECONOMY: Opportunities for Action



This 2023/2023 Progress Report supported with the engagement of the College Community during SDG Week in March, 2024. During that week, the following ECONOMY Opportunities for Action were identified:

- Focus on **expanding work-integrated learning programs** where students can earn while learning. This could involve more formalized partnerships with local organizations and expanding Co-op offerings to all students.
- **Increase on-campus employment opportunities for students facing financial barriers** by creating a designated workforce development fund that sponsors paid internships, research assistant roles, and work-study positions.





## ECONOMY: Opportunities for Action continued...



- Take **practical and concrete steps towards sustainable, public transport**. This can be manifested in the form of greater public transportation options provided via the College including working towards better bus timetables and routes for students, interregional travel for field schools/trips, and access to bikes and e-bikes/scooters.
- As noted above in Society, develop understanding and commitment to **financially sustainable Living Lab and circular economy initiatives** like the composting/food growing project. These initiatives create pride, showcase practical solutions, and improve well-being.
- Identify **measurable metrics for sustainability** and **build capacity and a case for Return on Investment** for internal reporting and accountability on the SDGs.
- Develop **financial literacy and investment workshops** and programs for students.
- Identify collaborative efforts to **fundraise and give back to the broader community in areas that can reduce inequalities** - this could be in the form of more student scholarships, youth needs, food drives, and/or supporting those in the community with high-risk needs.
- **Indigenous and reconciliation-based courses and/or training could be offered** to the broader Community - this would support reconciliation efforts and Indigenous and Ktunaxa scholars.
- Work with the appropriate groups (i.e. employees and students of color) to develop meaningful institution-wide policies and steps to **reduce inequalities resulting from anti-black and other forms of racism**. As a stepping stone for many newcomers to Canada, the College plays a role in facilitating a safe space within the Community for employees and students of color.
- Identify partners in the Community to **support graduates and international students with networking and access to post-graduate work opportunities**.
- Identify an ongoing list of **volunteer and experiential opportunities that build students' co-curricular records**.

# PARTNERSHIPS

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## Transfer Agreements | A Focus on new University of Alberta Engineering Agreement

COTR has developed numerous “block transfer agreements” with institutions across BC and Canada to support breaking down barriers for students transferring into or out of their educational pathway at the College. COTR has also structured many of its 2-year Diplomas to transfer directly into its BBA in Sustainable Business.

For example, a new transfer agreement was formalized in 2022 that guaranteed admission into Year 2 of Engineering at U of A as well as block transfer of the College’s certificate. This supports students with significant financial savings compared to a large university, and the benefits of the small classes and personalized attention from faculty.

## Hospitality Management students collaborate with Invermere Legion for Remembrance Day

COTR Invermere campus’ Hospitality Management students volunteered to support the Invermere Legion recognize Remembrance Day. They started with selling poppies at various locations in the week leading up to November 11, before helping with the set-up, tear down, and serving at the post-ceremony luncheon.



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*Students who start at College of the Rockies and then transfer to university to complete a degree are among the most successful transfer students in B.C., according to the B.C. Council on Admission and Transfer (BCCAT).*

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## MUSEA Public Lecture Series & Cranbrook Public Library

COTR's Arts and Sciences Faculty and the Cranbrook Library partnered for Museia, a three-part free public lecture series. Leading the first lecture in this series, Black Holes – the Deepest Darkness and the Overpowering Light, is Dr. Ben Tippett, Astronomy and Physics Instructor in the Department of Math and Sciences at College of the Rockies.

## St Eugene Resort Collaboration for Sustainable Tourism

2nd-year Tourism Management students collaborated with St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino to develop an SDG Assessment and Plan for the Resort. This partnership will be an ongoing, interactive experience for students, and in return the Resort receives guidance from students on how to capture and report on their Stewardship activities and identify leading best practices for measurement and active management.

## COTR holds first SDG Week in March, 2023

With the goal to improve SDG Literacy and increase cross-disciplinary conversations on SDG Planning, COTR held its first SDG Week in 2023. The event was coordinated by BBA Capstone student, Tanya Nadeau. SDG Week showcased student-led research work from ENST 200 that engaged the broader College Community to support in the development of this first-ever SDG Progress Report. Event Management students in RECR 220 supported with volunteering for the event and acting as SDG Ambassadors throughout the week.



## Windermere District Farmers' Institute & "Trades Samples Program" Partnership

COTR's Trades Sampler program formed a partnership in 2022 with the Windermere District Farmers' Institute (WDFI) that has benefitted both parties. "The Trades Sampler program is able to hold its training at the Institute's barn free of charge," said Michelle Taylor, Invermere campus manager. "In exchange, the students completed repairs to the building's interior, improving its safety and functionality." In addition to other, smaller, repairs Trades Sampler students refurbished the hard-to-manage vendor windows with safer, more functional ones and insulated much of the building.



## Indigenous partnership initiatives | COTR recognized for Indigenous education excellence

COTR's work to improve educational opportunities for Indigenous students was recognized by Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) at its 2023 Awards of Excellence. The annual awards presentations recognize best practices and individual achievements from colleges and institutes across the country. In the Indigenous Education Excellence category, College of the Rockies was presented with the bronze award.

Some of the highlights of initiatives the College has worked on include:

- College of the Rockies' Two Year (2021-2023) Action Plan includes a focus on "Truth and Reconciliation
- Indigenous Education collaborated with the College's Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning to create a series called "Dialogues with Indigenous People". This series is interactive and has several stages that include preparing learners (students and employees) to engage with invited Indigenous speakers; post-presentation reflection, and a Reciprocity event.
- For over five years, the College has had a Ktunaxa representative on the Board of Governors, and recently that has increased to two, with one being elected as Board Chair.
- In 2019, College of the Rockies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC). That same year the College partnered with the KNC to develop and implement the Human Service Worker Enhanced Program for Indigenous students.
- In 2022, the College unveiled Indigenous names for the new student housing buildings.
- The College partnered with the Métis Nation BC on several cohorts of the Human Service Worker Enhanced program and has also partnered with the Rocky Mountain Métis Association to deliver computer skills to Métis Elders for the past two years.



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*"I am honoured the College is being recognized for all we've done to advance Indigenous initiatives in our journey toward reconciliation. We are proud of the work we have done to build relationships with our Indigenous partners and look forward to building on the momentum we have across the College."*

*- Dana Wesley, Executive Director, Indigenous Strategy and Reconciliation*

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# The importance of Partnerships in realizing the SDGs

COTR's partnerships can greatly strengthen its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in several key ways:

- 01 Collaborative Research & Innovation**

Nurturing strategic partnerships with industries, government bodies, and other educational institutions enhance research on sustainable solutions, technology, and promoting impactful innovation aligned with the SDGs.
- 02 Sharing Resources & Capacity-building**

Collaborating with external organizations and our Community provides access to critical resources, funding, and expertise that amplify COTR's ability to access funding for research, scholarships and the implementation of sustainability initiatives.
- 03 Meaningful Community Engagement**

Strong, defined partnerships with local and global organizations help Colleges like ours address real-world sustainability challenges through joint initiatives and inspiration, which fosters proven societal impact.
- 04 Curriculum Development & Skill-building**

By working with organizations focused on sustainability, COTR can develop academic programs and training that integrate SDG-related knowledge, preparing students for careers focused on changemaking and solving real-world problems
- 05 Global Impact & Local Relevance**

International partnerships, in particular, can extend our influence as a small College, allowing us to contribute not only in our local Communities but also to global SDG efforts through joint projects and research.

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*Our Mission states that through our College, we transform lives and enrich communities through the power of education. Partnerships are a key strength and opportunity in helping us work towards this Mission daily. Partnerships are the life force of our organization that helps our students and each other excel, grow and reach that highest peak of our potential.*

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## PARTNERSHIPS: Opportunities for Action



This 2023/2023 Progress Report supported with the engagement of the College Community during SDG Week in March, 2024. During that week, the following PARTNERSHIP Opportunities for Action were identified:

- **Assess the feasibility of the “CityStudio” initiative** to develop a more formalized means for “making local communities more sustainable, inclusive, joyful and equitable.”
- Develop a case to bring on a **sustainability officer role** specific to formalizing community-based partnerships and furthering the reporting and impact of sustainability initiatives at the College.
- Improve and increase **faculty-based relationships with the Ktunaxa Nation and Ktunaxa scholars.**
- Continued and **ongoing strategy and support for internationalization** in the form of global exchanges, international field schools, and international opportunities to take students abroad

# NEXT STEPS

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This Report contains several ideas that make an impact on the college’s “forward and Upward” Strategic Plan 2024. Next Steps are detailed here for ongoing momentum and success

Considerable strides have already been made towards limiting our carbon footprint, improving inclusion-focused initiatives and innovatively securing and sustaining resources for actionable change. However, maintaining momentum and setting a clear timeline for continuous improvement on all sustainability metrics are crucial. Efforts to promote sustainability have increased, but greater culture-building and involvement at all levels of the organization are important in order to ensure meaningful changes stick. Educators must be supported in integrating sustainability into teaching, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and making sustainability courses accessible to students of all backgrounds.

**To develop and maintain our position as leaders in sustainability, the College of the Rockies must continue its efforts and strive for even greater goals. This Report contains a number of ideas for taking steps forward, and in order to truly move “Forward and Upward,” College-wide, integrated Next Steps are detailed here for ongoing momentum and success.**



## Metrics & Accountability

Develop metrics and KPIs for improved accountability and continuous improvement. Dedicate resources to building these metrics, managing the reporting process, and setting priorities.



## SDG Communications Integration

Integrating the SDGs into all aspects of internal and external Communications and Reporting will support with efficient and effective progress reporting, improved culture-building/sustainability literacy, and development of internal and external partnerships.

# NEXT STEPS continued...

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## **Work Towards Carbon Neutrality**

Work towards making the College carbon neutral by mapping emissions and introducing countermeasures. Support the College Community in making personal steps to limiting carbon footprints.



## **Engage in Networks**

In an effort to engage in best practices, collaborate and add a level of accountability and inspiration, join and/or sign onto important national and global networks such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the SDG Accord through CICan, and other relevant and respected networks.



## **Commit Resources**

Designate an individual and/or department (such as “Finance & Corporate Services”) that holds ultimate responsibility for overseeing sustainability efforts. Assign resources to a group (i.e. Sustainability Committee) and/or individuals (i.e. Expert Faculty) who should take the lead in developing and implementing the recommended measures.



## **Teaching & Learning Supports**

Focus on the SDGs and sustainability in teaching and learning by increasing the number of courses, resources and/or support for instructors. Curriculum mapping can occur with the support of along with the appointment of an SDG Learning Specialist.



# Gratitude

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Published in November, 2024, the information compiled within **this report was lead by Faculty Member, Becky Pelkonen (MSc, PBDM)** with project-based support from **BBA Capstone student, Tanya Nadeau** and the **ENST 200 (Environmental Sustainability) students from 2022 and 2023**. Thank you also to the following supporters and contributors of this work:

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**Allan Knibbs, Director of Facilities** for data support, responsible facilities management and green technology expertise.

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*We thank you our local and global partners and the entire College of the Rockies community for your support in our efforts to make meaningful steps towards the SDGs.*

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