

# Campus Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2030



Sustainable Campus Working Group  
University of Lethbridge

## Territorial Acknowledgement & Iniskim

Oki! Welcome to Iniskim University of Lethbridge

Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University of Lethbridge acknowledges and deeply appreciates the Siksikaitsitapii peoples' connection to their traditional territory. We, as people living and benefiting from Blackfoot Confederacy traditional territory, honour the traditions of people who have cared for this land since time immemorial. We recognize the diverse population of Indigenous Peoples who attend the University of Lethbridge and the contributions these Indigenous Peoples have made in shaping and strengthening the University community in the past, present, and in the future.

# Principles & Approach

The University of Lethbridge serves many purposes for our communities. We are more than physical campuses. We exist in many places and spaces, in learning and knowledge, and in playing and living across communities. And we exist in the regional, provincial, national, and global ecosystems of post-secondary institutions and communities of expertise committed to the principles of sustainability and sustainable development.

Our work to create a vision for campus sustainability and action is informed by early definitions and priority setting, such as that in the Brundtland Report, which loosely defines sustainable development as that which meets the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future. It is also importantly guided by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) that speak holistically to the concepts of sustainability as a global imperative to address inequities, environmental and ecosystem health and function, and innovation and leadership.



Source: <https://www.un.org/en/sustainable-development-goals>

The principles of the Iniskim Governance Process and the Buffalo Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal, and Restoration shall be respected and referenced as we strive for sustainability as it pertains to environmental, social-cultural, and economic pillars and across our campuses, courses, and commitments.

With these principles, protocols, and goals in mind, we strive to create, model, and share ideas and innovations for engaged and knowledgeable citizenry, sustainable systems and surroundings, and conscious decision-making and leadership. We commit to inclusion of both Iniskim Indigenous Relations and Sustainability as foundational values and moral imperatives of the University of Lethbridge. In so doing, both will be applied to the assessment and design of new projects and programs and in the process of evaluating continuing projects, programs, and activities.

The collective ideas, aspirations, and vision shared with members of the Sustainable Campus Working Group were categorized within three broad commitments:

- 1. Empower Action**
- 2. Leverage Efficiency and Innovation**
- 3. Sustain Biodiversity**

Within each commitment are multiple themes that reflect common objectives and actions arising from our core principles. The time horizon for each activity, goal, or opportunity listed under the themes are colour coded as follows:

-  Ongoing
-  Immediate
-  Short
-  Medium
-  Long

And the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that each commitment or theme contributes to is provided to support both monitoring of and reporting on achievements as well as to demonstrate alignment with global sustainability actions.



*Empower Action*

## Themes:

1. Sustainability Leadership
2. Teaching & Learning
3. Research, Scholarship & Creativity
4. Community Engagement & Collaboration
5. Communication & Celebration

Supporting and enabling the many communities of University of Lethbridge to uplift our thinking and actions, expand our skills and expertise, and accelerate our work to build sustainability into our daily activities and approaches to our work and learning.

Creating capacity and empowering champions to advance sustainability and implement sustainability principles across our teaching, research, service, and operations are necessary to achieve our goals.

Integrating sustainability principles and actions in teaching, research and operations will leverage global movements, resources, and expertise, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ([UN SDGs](#)), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action ([TRC Calls to Action](#)), and the Buffalo Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal, and Restoration ([Buffalo Treaty](#)). Addressing challenges of environmental sustainability and climate change requires systemic change and shared commitment to understand the science, prepare ourselves for adaptation, and change our work and learning systems to slow the pace and impacts of change.

Threading sustainability into curricula, improving accessibility for diverse and flexible learning environments, expanding experiential and community-engaged learning, and equipping faculty, staff, and students to integrate sustainability principles and actions in their work and learning will be supported at the levels of administrative units and employees.

## Sustainability Leadership

- Visible commitment across senior leadership to establish clear objectives and metrics that demonstrate improvement in sustainability performance.
- Continue to support the leadership of and by the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee.
- Share evidence of and progress toward institutional and Faculty/School commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Initiate participation in the AASHE STARS program.
- Work with Faculties and Schools to create their own targeted and disciplinary-aligned commitments to Campus Sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- Create an Office of Sustainability starting with a Sustainability Officer. The Office is initially tasked with supporting STARS reporting, implementation actions and goals, and assisting all units with their sustainability plans and reporting.
- Collaborate to create space in the Professional Activities Report (PAR) process to recognize faculty contributions to sustainability actions and impacts.
- Create and implement an innovative budget model that recognizes and rewards financial savings and revenues generated through sustainability initiatives.
- Establish a sustainability action donation fund.

#### RELEVANT UN SDGs

Goal 4 Quality Education

Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals

## Teaching and Learning

- Include and enhance sustainability concepts in curricula such that all students have access to formal education about sustainability actions and development as part of their degree programs.
- Include sustainability competitions and challenges as part of New Student Orientation, Welcome Back events, and Agility programming.
- Link the Sustainable Campus webpage to sustainability-related publications, theses, and projects stored in the UofL repository.
- Create a core interdisciplinary sustainability actions course that uses our physical campuses and locations as pedagogical tools and methods.
- Contribute to the STARS® inventory of environmental and socio-cultural sustainability curriculum across all academic programs.

#### RELEVANT UN SDGs

Goal 4 Quality Education

Goal 8 Decent work and economic growth

Goal 13 Climate Action

## Research, Scholarship and Creativity

- Encourage, recognize, and celebrate sustainability research, scholarship, and creativity as well as efforts to improve the sustainability of research, scholarship and creativity at University of Lethbridge.

- Support partnerships that advance sustainability, put sustainability into action, and contribute to local and regional sustainability efforts.
- Create a searchable and user-friendly inventory of our sustainability and climate change research activities (current and past).
- Increase campus-based sustainability education and knowledge creation (use our physical and natural spaces as teaching and research resources/assets).
- Evaluate research travel options and policies to implement an offset system or other best practices (such as virtual attendance, shared transportation, etc.).
- Include sustainability workshops in research student professional development programming offered by the School of Graduate and PostDoctoral Studies.
- Implement My Green Lab® principles, working with the Procurement team to leverage purchasing power for increasingly environmentally friendly options in research supplies and equipment.

#### RELEVANT UN SDGs

Goal 3 Good Health and Wellbeing  
 Goal 6 Clean Water and Sanitation  
 Goal 7 Affordable and Clean Energy  
 Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure  
 Goal 13 Climate Action  
 Goal 14 Life below Water  
 Goal 15 Life on Land

## Community Engagement and Collaboration

- Increase the number of sustainability events on- and off-campus, including both credit and non-credit (lifelong learning) opportunities to strengthen partnerships and training.
- Increase and report on student experiential learning with organizations that have and/or are working toward development of sustainability programs.
- Increase the number of regional partnerships that include sustainability initiatives, programs, and experiences.
- Increase awareness and access to ULeithbridge Coutts Centre for Western Heritage gardens, Indigenous medicinal gardens, and pollinator gardens.
- Conduct triennial surveys on campus community perceptions and visibility of sustainability initiatives and accomplishments.

#### RELEVANT UN SDGs

Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure  
 Goal 12 Responsible Consumption and Production



Goal 13 Climate Action  
Goal 17 Partnership for the Goals

## Communication and Celebration

- Produce annual reports on achievements and innovation in support of the sustainability plan.
- Ensure that on-campus communications include updates on progress toward advancing sustainability.
- Produce celebratory profiles of faculty, students, and staff who are advancing sustainability through their work.
- Celebrate institutional, departmental and program-level, and individual achievements toward our shared sustainability goals.
- Leverage government and community grants, awards, and celebrations to share stories of our achievements toward the UN SDGs and our institutional goals.
- Create real-time data monitoring and dashboard access for both on- and off-campus communities to review and use, particularly relating to energy and emissions, travel and transportation, water, and waste.

RELEVANT UN SDGs

Goal 12 Responsible Consumption and Production

Goal 13 Climate Action



*Leverage Efficiency  
and Innovation*

## Themes:

1. Energy & Emissions
2. Sustainable Buildings
3. Travel & Transportation
4. Water
5. Waste
6. Food Security & Operations

### RELEVANT UN SDGs

- Goal 7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 12 Responsible Consumption and Production

Aligning our structures, processes, investments, and resources with sustainability solutions that reduce emissions, waste production, and water use. As a research-intensive university, our capacity for innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship is grounded in the strengths and courage to confront the greatest challenges of our time. While technology and infrastructure alone cannot solve these challenges, they are significant tools to help us reduce our waste, water, and carbon footprints.

## Energy and Emissions

- Maintain space stewardship principles and sustainability principles in renovation activities for effective use of existing and new space and facilities to avoid or postpone new construction.
- Elevate accountability and incentives for reducing energy demand and consumption by providing re-investment in sustainability programming with achievement of demonstrable cost-savings (tracking and monitoring).
- Install power timers for classroom and office technologies automatic shutoff.
- Create a transparent funding mechanism to reinvest savings from energy efficiency projects and waste reduction measures to fund continuous sustainability improvement efforts.
- Increase on-campus renewable energy sources, including rooftop solar to at least 5MW by 2025.
- Reduce energy consumption by implementing additional energy efficiency and conservation measures.
- Minimize greenhouse gas emissions associated with Lethbridge Campus operations to support 50% reduction by 2030 and establish a zero-carbon campus by 2050.

- Collaborate with Calgary Campus operations and building management team to achieve greenhouse gas emissions and zero-carbon campus aligned with Lethbridge Campus goals.

## Sustainable Buildings

- Include innovative and cost-effective environmental sustainability in the design, construction, renovation, and maintenance of campus buildings.
- Strive for LEED, 4 Green Globe, or similar environmental certification for new construction and major renovations.
- Leverage chemical-free pest controls and fire suppression around buildings to maintain native species and shade trees.
- Implement a tree and shrub replacement program for all new construction and major renovations to ensure net positive outcomes.
- Become a registered pollinator campus.

## Travel and Transportation

- Increase use of the UPass program.
- Improve understandings and recognition of carbon intensive choices, such as air travel and commuting.
- Ensure that high quality video conferencing and teaching facilities are available across campus to encourage and support virtual participation in off campus conferences, workshops, and courses (as relevant).
- Promote sustainable and active transportation options to and around campus.
- Create, expand, and secure bike storage and e-scooter use/access/parking on campus (including lower campus).
- Minimize the carbon footprint and impact of University-managed vehicle fleet by replacing with improved efficiency and/or electric vehicles and smaller on-campus commuter options over larger trucks.
- Prepare and plan to establish a fleet vehicle sharing model to reduce the number of vehicles required in the fleet to support operations, research, and teaching and learning as permitted within risk, insurance, and liability considerations.
- Create priority carpool parking spaces.

## Water

- Minimize water consumption through conservation and efficiency measures, including demand-side management, water reuse, and recycling in sustainable building design.
- Increase drought-tolerant, native species landscaping.
- Continue transition to low flow and waterless toilets and urinals.
- Eliminate sales and use of bottled water on campus. Encourage this change by providing free reusable water bottles and adding more bottle refill stations.
- Calculate water volumes available for reclamation (cistern storage) and drought management.

## Waste

- Decrease cross-contamination of waste streams to optimize composting, recycling, and reuse in the collection of those materials.
- Reduce packaging waste and increase purchase of recycled content materials and products where reusable options are not available or feasible.
- Eliminate paper agendas and meeting materials.
- Maximize on-campus composting program with supplemental access to City of Lethbridge composting services where on-campus capacity falls short.
- Work with vendors and partners to eliminate single-use items.
- Revise policies, procedures and guidelines to promote sustainable procurement and sharing of surplus goods across University departments and units.
- Embed sustainability principles into procurement activities to reduce footprint and permit reporting on economic, social, and environmental impacts and benefits of purchasing decisions.

## Food Security and Operations

- Increase awareness and skills to make use of on-campus community gardens.
- Create an endowment that provides annual income for purchase and access to nutritional food choices to all who experience food insecurity.
- Expand the food waste composting program and accessibility across campus.
- Increase availability of local and sustainably produced foods on campus.
- Become a Fair Trade campus.



*Sustain Biodiversity*

## Themes:

1. Respect for Native Biodiversity
2. Land Use Management

### RELEVANT UN SDGs:

- Goal 3 Good Health and Wellbeing
- Goal 4 Quality Education
- Goal 13 Climate Action
- Goal 15 Life on Land
- Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Valuing and protecting the natural environments and ecosystems in which we work and learn to sustain all living beings, ecosystem functions, and communities. With a significant land base of natural grasslands and coulees in Lethbridge, and a downtown presence in Calgary, the ways in which we commit to actions that sustain biodiversity will differ by location and discipline.

The physical landscapes of our campuses differ greatly and each must include infrastructure, natural spaces and resources, and that inspire sustainability and biodiversity. Integrating scientific principles and institutional commitment to biodiversity across capital planning and land management practices is essential to sustaining biodiversity. Including priorities for food security, medicine gardens and native prairie vegetation, thriving environments for insects, reptiles, and mammals, and year-round recreation spaces into campus master planning, curricula, and research, scholarship, and creativity is essential for sustaining biodiversity.

## Respect for Native Biodiversity

- Enhance conservation and biodiversity outcomes through the use of beneficial environmental management of our campus.
- Evaluate all alternatives to biodiversity disruption in the operations, construction, and use of the natural ecosystems on which we are situated. Allow the balance to tip in favour of native biodiversity in operations and construction decisions.
- Incorporate the campus(es) natural ecosystems into formal education, teaching and learning, and research, scholarship, and creative activities as deliberate pedagogical methods for improving sustainability awareness and citizenship.
- Increase communications and engagement – both formal and informal, interpretative signage, and accolades – to enhance awareness of and involvement in understanding and respecting campus biodiversity.

## Land Use Management

- Maintain university grounds in an environmentally sensitive way, limiting chemical use, respecting local ecosystems, species at risk and protected species, and including teaching, learning, and research expertise to manage university lands (whether in Lethbridge or other owned and leased spaces).
- Ensure that projects and initiatives to advance our other Commitments and Themes do not negatively impact biodiversity and native landscape / ecosystem functions.
- Develop land management principles and guidelines that respect and sustain abundant native biodiversity (plants, animals, insects, microbes, aquatic organisms, etc.) on our campuses and affiliated lands.
- Promote the use of green spaces to grow food on campus.



## Pathways to Achieving & Celebrating the Commitments

Making our projects and achievements visible and accessible to internal and external audiences will aid in supporting sustainability as a campus community. As a university community, all members have opportunities and a responsibility to contribute to sustainability.

With completion of the Sustainable Campus Plan, the implementation of projects, programs, and resources to make tangible, positive impacts will be articulated as SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) goals. Accountability and tracking of SMART goals are essential for both working toward and demonstrating commitment and impacts of sustainability actions.

One method for tracking success against our own baseline, and the achievements of comparable universities and colleges, of our sustainability performance as a post-secondary institution is the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ ([STARS®](#)). As a platform and series of tools specifically designed for post-secondary institutions, the definitions and elements of sustainability across the many functions, purposes, and works of academic and administrative communities are reflected and respected.

### Actions for Units, Departments & Faculties

Identify at least three United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ([UN SDGs](#)) that align best with your discipline, expertise and knowledge, expectations, and capacity to focus your commitment to implementing sustainability into teaching, research, service and operations. Every person and unit can play a role and actively contribute to creating a more sustainable campus environment.

Input your data to the [STARS](#) and update your data annually to reflect changes to improve access to sustainability knowledge, activities and events, supports, and processes.

### Actions for Individuals

Check out the United Nations [Actions for a Healthy Planet](#) (and log your progress).

# Acknowledgements and Resources

The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group is grateful to the Sustainable Campus Working Group and the many individuals across our campuses and communities who contributed to open houses, surveys, classroom discussions, student events, and other information sessions that were essential to the creation of the Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan.

## **Sustainable Campus Working Group**

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## **Resources**

The Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration (2022)

<https://www.buffalotreaty.com/>

The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (n.d.) <https://stars.aashe.org/>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015)

<https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (n.d.) <https://www.un.org/en/sustainable-development-goals>

University of Lethbridge Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (n.d.)

<https://www.ulethbridge.ca/research/environmental-sustainability-advisory-committee-esac>