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| Thompson Rivers University  Department of Environment and Sustainability  Marketing and Communications Research Project  Final Report  By James Gordon, consultant  September, 2012  Kamloops, BC |

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# Executive Summary

The Thompson Rivers University Department of Environment and Sustainability (TRUDES) has been involved in a variety of successful environmental sustainability initiatives in its relatively short lifespan since it began in 2009. Despite this impressive track record, however, TRUDES has not enjoyed a commensurate level of recognition for the good work it has done in the realm of environmental sustainability. Along with not receiving much recognition is the fact that many in the TRU community are not even aware of the very existence of the department. In a Spring 2012 TRU survey, almost 20% of TRU staff and faculty answered “No” to the question “Are you aware that TRU has a department of environment and sustainability?” As startling as this figure is, however, over 50% of students said the same thing! Clearly, something had to be done to do a better job of getting the message out about what TRUDES is doing and about the department itself. To address this issue, this marketing and communications research project was undertaken between January and April 2012 to try and help in this regard.

The first step with the project was to conduct an inventory of all of the significant environmental sustainability initiatives on campus, of which there were seventy six. Next was to determine the effectiveness of all of those initiatives that TRUDES had some level of control over. This was done by analysing the responses of three groups regarding their thoughts about each of the initiatives. The three groups were five TRUDES key stakeholders, TRU students (and one staff member) from four focus groups, and staff, faculty and student survey respondents. The analysis of all of their responses is summarised in the document *TRUDES Initiatives Effectiveness Commentary.*

After this, a *Future Marketing Options Analysis* report was written. This report lays out, with examples from three other similar BC universities, the options available to TRUDES to market itself and what it does to its various audiences.

Based on the analysis of all of the environmental sustainability research conducted, a list of nine recommendations was then drawn up to help guide TRUDES with its marketing and communications. By far the most important recommendation of the nine is the first one: Use the Marketing Plan Template. If the goal of marketing is to sell what you’re offering, then having a plan to do so will likely help you reach that goal a lot easier and quicker than if you didn’t have a plan. The template forces you to think through all of the angles and nuances of creating a successful plan. The plan should also be created in a timely fashion and with all key stakeholders of the initiative being marketed. I firmly believe that following this one recommendation alone will help promote TRUDES itself and all of the important and exciting initiatives that it’s offering, and propel the department and what it does into the mainstream of TRU life and even beyond those borders.

Here are the nine recommendations, in order of importance:

1. Focus on key marketing tools.
   1. Use the Marketing Plan Template (included).
   2. Review the ‘look’ for TRUDES.
   3. Set goals.
   4. Review what print materials to use.
   5. Create regular opportunities for input and surveying.
   6. Use Community-Based Social Marketing when appropriate.
   7. Use the Marketing Tracking Chart (included).
2. Continue seeking out partnerships with dedicated and reputable TRU professors, staff, departments and offices, and local organizations.
3. Continue with certain hands-on initiatives because of the success they’ve seen.
4. Have fun and be social!
5. Use the upcoming change in office space as an opportunity to promote TRUDES.
6. Create opportunities to showcase environmental sustainability solutions.
7. Conduct an events audit and consider a marquee TRUDES event.
8. Consider more and/or other ways to get involved with solar power.
9. Appeal to people’s emotions.

Finally, with these recommendations as a guidepost, an *Implementation Plan* was devised to help guide TRUDES over the next two years. This Plan focuses primarily on events, which constitute one of the operational pillars of the department, and identifies possible event partners.

# Introduction

As the most influential institution for higher learning in the region, TRU has opportunities on a regular basis to exert positive influences on many aspects of daily life for the people who live in the region. The TRU Department of Environmental Sustainability (TRUDES) is no different from other TRU departments and offices in this regard, and strives to make a positive impact both in the short and long term, and both within and outside of the TRU borders.

This report hopes to help TRUDES in two specific areas of communications and marketing: to raise its profile, since it is still a relatively new department within the university (started at the beginning of 2009), and, part and parcel with this, to raise the awareness levels and, ultimately, the participation rates of its many and varied initiatives and events both within the TRU and Kamloops communities and beyond. The final *Recommendations Report* and *Implementation Plan* are the result of much research and analysis in the field of environmental sustainability at TRU that began in January and ended in August 2012.

All of the accompanying documents used to arrive at the conclusions outlined in these two documents are contained in this document as PDFs. The reason for doing so was to keep the format of this document intact in a 8.5”x11” portrait orientation. Since many of the individual documents were created in landscape format and would not fit with the portrait orientation of this document, it seemed logical to simply include them as embedded PDFs. In the name of consistency, therefore, it seemed logical to include all of the other portrait oriented documents in the same embedded PDF format. In total there are seventeen individual embedded PDF documents.

# Review and Inventory of Marketing Initiatives

## TRUDES Initiatives Inventory

To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



## TRUDES Initiatives Effectiveness Commentary

To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



### TRUDES Key Stakeholder Grades for TRUDES Initiatives

To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



#### Guide for TRUDES Key Stakeholders to Grade the Effectiveness of TRUDES Initiatives

The following guide is meant to help interpret the information in the document above*.* To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



### Focus Groups Results Summary

The following is a summary of the results of the four focus groups (April 3, April 4 and two on April 5, 2012). To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



#### Instructions for TRU Environmental Sustainability Focus Group Participants

The following instructions were given to all focus group participants to inform them of the purpose of the focus group. To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



#### Focus Group Transcripts

The following four PDFs are the transcripts of the four focus groups. To see these documents, please double-click on the PDF icons below.









### Survey Results

The following are the results from a survey conducted in late April 2012 to find out what TRU students, faculty and staff thought about environmental sustainability at TRU. The results are broken down into student responses and faculty and staff responses.

#### Student survey responses

The following is the results of the student responses. To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



#### Faculty and Staff survey responses

The following is the results of the faculty and staff responses. To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



# Department Future Marketing Options Analysis

The following is the report *Analysis of Future Marketing Options to Promote Environmental Sustainability Initiatives at TRU.* To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



# Recommendations

The following is the report *TRUDES Recommendations 2012.* To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



### Marketing Plan Template

The following is the *Marketing Plan Template*. To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



### Marketing Tracking Chart

The following is the *Marketing Tracking Chart*. To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



#### Guide for using the Marketing Tracking Chart

The following is the *Guide for using the Marketing Tracking Chart*. To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



# Implementation Plan

The following is the report *TRUDES Implementation Plan 2012.* To see this document, please double-click on the PDF icon below.



# Conclusion

TRUDES has built a solid reputation around TRU and Kamloops since it began in 2009. The number and variety of initiatives in has rolled out since then is very impressive, and this is shared by many in this research project. Having said this, the department could become far more influential in the realm of environmental sustainability throughout TRU with a more coordinated and intense marketing and communication focus. This fact was also shared by many of the research respondents.

Effective marketing and communications require a combination of science and art. The science aspect requires attention to such things as knowing your target market and the types of marketing tools they respond to, as well as understanding the timing of when to roll out certain marketing tools so that the target market has time to consider and act on what you are offering. The artistic side of marketing requires attention to such things as creating engaging marketing messages, images and events, as well as knowing how to attract the media to cover your offering.

By following the first recommendation in this report and using the Marketing Plan Template, I believe TRUDES will set itself up to be more successful with both the scientific and artistic sides of marketing and communication, hence bettering its chances of running a well publicised department and well attended initiatives. The other recommendations in this report will also help in this regard but using the Template is a simple and easily accomplished starting point to achieving these goals.

It is my firm belief that in this day and age there is a strong appetite by a healthy number of the population both at TRU, in Kamloops and further afield to get involved in the environmental sustainability movement and ‘do good work’. Everywhere you turn there is evidence of this; people and organizations of all stripes are getting involved and trying to make a positive impact. I have no doubt that if TRUDES continues its focus on offering quality initiatives and then combines this with making a concerted effort to better communicate about and market these initiatives, then the TRU community will respond accordingly and enthusiastically participate in them. Doing so will continue to drive this vital movement forward which, in this day and age, is needed more than ever.