



**THOMPSON
RIVERS
UNIVERSITY**

Adventure
Studies

ADVENTURE STUDIES **DEPARTMENT**

Annual Report 2024-2025





Land acknowledgement

Thompson Rivers University campuses are on the ancestral lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops campus) and the T'exelc (Williams Lake campus) within Secwepemcúlecw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. The region TRU serves also extends into the territories of the St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Nuxalk, Tšilhqot'in, Dakelh and Syilx peoples.



Kwlélkwle MOUNT LOLO

The Adventure Studies department has been named Kwlélkwle (Mount Lolo) through the Secwépemc Place Names Initiative. This area holds deep cultural significance as a place where Secwépemc youth took part in étsxem, a rite of passage to become contributing members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. In many ways, the adventure studies program reflects this spirit—challenging students physically, mentally and spiritually as they grow into capable and resilient leaders.



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About this report

Covering the period from Sunday, Aug. 25, 2024, to Thursday, May 15, 2025, this annual report highlights the activities and achievements of the Adventure Studies department. It features student stories, photographs and reflections that capture the spirit of the year, along with a comprehensive overview of departmental initiatives and milestones. The report is available in print and on the Adventure Studies [website](#).

From the co-chairs: James Rodger and Sharman Learie

As co-chairs of this exceptional program, we are thrilled to share with you what makes our department truly unique in the world of adventure education.

Our faculty consists of accomplished professionals who are not only respected academics but also highly skilled technicians in their respective fields. This rare combination allows us to offer a curriculum that seamlessly blends theory and practice, providing our students with a comprehensive understanding of the adventure tourism industry.

The Adventure Guide certificate and diploma at TRU are renowned for their technical rigor and hands-on approach. Our students spend approximately 60 per cent of their course time in the field, honing skills in activities like mountaineering, whitewater kayaking, rock climbing and backcountry skiing. This extensive field experience ensures our graduates are not only knowledgeable but also highly competent in their chosen specialties.

In our upper-level courses within the adventure major of the Bachelor of Tourism Management program, we remain true to our experiential learning roots while integrating academic theory. Many of these courses emphasize project-based learning, allowing students to work on real-world projects for businesses and communities. Our practicum partners, Mike Wiegele Heli Ski and Nahanni River Adventure, to name a few, are industry leaders and consistent employers of our graduates.

We take pride in our role as cultivators of the next generation of adventure leaders. Our program goes beyond teaching technical skills; we focus on developing critical thinking, risk management and leadership abilities that are essential for success in the adventure industry. Our graduates emerge as well-rounded professionals ready to take on leadership roles and make significant contributions to the field.

Our strong ties to the adventure industry provide our students with unparalleled networking opportunities and real-world experience. Our instructors are active guides and industry professionals bringing current practices and insights directly into the classroom and field.

Through our international field schools and diverse course offerings, we encourage our students to develop a global perspective on adventure tourism. This international outlook prepares our graduates to work effectively in various cultural contexts and to understand the global nature of the industry.

In the Adventure Studies department, we are committed to providing an educational experience that is as thrilling as it is thorough. We invite you to join us in pushing the boundaries of what's possible in adventure education and to become part of the next generation of industry leaders.



The Adventure Studies department

History of the Adventure Guide program

Now in its thirty-third year, the Adventure Studies department at TRU continues to be recognized for its hands-on learning, technical depth and strong industry partnerships.

Launched in 1992 as the Adventure Guide diploma, the program quickly became a flagship offering. In 2009, the Adventure Guide certificate was introduced, nearly doubling first-year capacity and creating a laddered pathway into the diploma. Today, students can further their education by transitioning into the Bachelor of Tourism Management or Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies, both with adventure-focused specializations.

Partnerships have long been central to the department's mission. From 1996 to 2018, TRU supported the delivery of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) training program. From 2013 to 2022, the department launched an adventure guide certificate program in Iceland through a partnership with Keilir Health Academy and TRU World.

Students benefit from a learning model grounded in experience. Through international expeditions, weeklong field courses across British Columbia and beyond, reconciliation-focused field schools,

service projects and dual-credit opportunities for high school students, the department continues to expand meaningful real-world learning experiences.

This legacy of innovation, leadership and experiential learning continues to shape the future of adventure education at TRU.





Our programs

The Adventure Studies department continues to lead the way in high-impact, experiential education at TRU. Our suite of programs—including Pathways to Adventure, the adventure guide certificate and the adventure guide diploma reflects the university's [Bold Academic Plan](#) through a deep commitment to hands-on learning, land-based education and flexible pathways that support lifelong learners.

Through immersive field experiences, strong community and Indigenous partnerships and an expanding ladder of credentials, we are proud to serve as a model for halo programming, helping shape adaptable, globally competent graduates ready for bold futures.



Pathways to Adventure



Launched this past year, Pathways to Adventure is a select bundle of course offerings comprised of lower-level adventure skills courses that allow students to build up their skills and experience.

Combining these courses with field experience will allow students to meet the entrance requirements for the Adventure Guide certificate. This is the ideal pathway for students who are currently in high school and those that do not meet the minimum age requirement (19) for the certificate.

Adventure Guide certificate



The certificate offers students an immersive, eight-month introduction to the adventure industry. The program begins with foundational courses in wilderness travel, leadership and guiding, followed by a selection of electives such

as mountaineering, whitewater rafting, kayaking, rock climbing and more.

Students spend over half of their time in the field, learning in real-world settings across B.C., Alberta and the western U.S. This is more than a program—it's a launchpad to a career in guiding, leadership and adventure tourism.

Adventure Guide diploma



Building on the certificate, the second year of the program dives deeper into advanced guiding, business and risk management skills.

The classroom courses for the diploma program include expedition planning, marketing, search and rescue, accounting and legal liability—preparing you to lead with confidence in the industry.

Choose from high-level electives like ice climbing, ski touring, swift water rescue, surfing and more. The program ends with a student-led expedition to a destination of their choosing. This year, students traveled to France, Belize and Nicaragua.

Students who successfully complete the diploma can then move into their third year of the Bachelor of Tourism Management program.





Meet the department

Our faculty are passionate educators, mentors and industry leaders who shape the future of adventure tourism. With expertise across a range of disciplines, they bring deep knowledge from both academia and industry. Through personalized mentorship, they inspire students to excel beyond the four walls of a classroom. Our faculty's dedication to scholarly pursuit and student success ensures a transformative learning experience, shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

Our dedicated staff are the backbone of adventure studies, ensuring every trip, course and expedition runs smoothly. From managing gear and maintaining vehicles to coordinating logistics and student support, their behind-the-scenes work makes hands-on learning possible. Their professionalism, care and commitment help create an organized and welcoming environment for students and faculty alike..

Sharman Learie, co-chair and associate teaching professor

Program lead for surfing



Sharman has been a guide and instructor for over 30 years, specializing in teaching surfing and paddle sports throughout western Canada and the United States. He has been an associate teaching professor in the adventure studies department for over 20 years and has served as the department chair or coordinator for over 15 years.

Sharman is a certified level two surf instructor with the

International Surf Association. He's also an instructor trainer with Canoe Kayak BC, a swift water rescue instructor for Rescue Canada and a rafting trip leader and examiner for commercial river rafting. He co-founded Stellar Descents Backcountry Adventures Ltd., a whitewater rafting company that pioneered numerous rivers in the Robson Valley during its five years of business.

Sharman has served on numerous educational committees, including Canoe Kayak BC, Paddle Canada and the BC River Outfitters Association. He was instrumental in bringing the International Surf Association certification program to Canada.

Sharman has also been on the board of the Rivershed Society of BC, where he co-designed the Sustainable Living and Leadership Program and the Sprott Foundation where he engages in philanthropic work on homelessness, hunger and urgent needs.

James Rodger, co-chair and associate teaching professor

Program lead for rafting and swift water rescue courses



Prior to joining TRU, James was an international river guide and operations manager for 30 years, having worked on six of the world's seven continents. James has been teaching rafting and river rescue courses for the last 25 years across the globe, having taught and mentored the first female Turkish and Fijian river guides. His passions include natural history, rivers and wild places.

He is currently one of two International Raft Federation Level 4/5 instructors in western Canada. James enjoys teaching students on the river during raft and swift water rescue courses. Watching them grow on the river are special moments he cherishes.

James has a Master of Arts in Leadership from Royal Roads University. During his studies, he honed his skills to lead himself, others and organizations. In 2023, James joined forces with Jay Goddard to create TRU's first outdoor therapy course that combines human service with adventure studies.

Jerry Isaak, program coordinator and associate teaching professor

Program lead for ski touring



Jerry Isaak is an associate teaching professor and the ski touring and avalanche program lead. A graduate of the Adventure Guide diploma in 2007, Jerry holds certification as an ACMG Ski Guide and an MSc in Outdoor Education from the University of Edinburgh. He is an Advanced Avalanche Educator Member of the Canadian Avalanche Association and

instructs courses throughout the ski touring curriculum and on-campus in the diploma and the Bachelor of Tourism Management.

His current research focuses on the training and assessment of non-technical skills (social and cognitive) for adventure guides as well as the influence of human factors on decision making in avalanche terrain.

Simon Ward-Able, program coordinator and associate teaching professor

Program lead for white water kayaking



Simon Ward-Able is an assistant teaching professor in the Adventure Studies department and has been in the department since 2016. A graduate of the adventure management diploma in 2013, Simon came here for the mountain and ski programs but quickly fell in love with all things whitewater. A raft guide, swift water rescue instructor and whitewater kayak instructor, Simon enjoys sharing a passion for the river.

When he is not on the river, he can be found teaching a variety of courses in the adventure certificate, diploma and degree programs. Simon is also an avid disc-golfer and has introduced students to the sport during field days.

In 2022, Simon completed a Master of Arts in Leadership Studies from Royal Roads University where he also explored the relationship between mindfulness and adventure education on the river as well as in daily life. He gained a greater understanding of personal and organization leadership while also expanding his outdoor leadership practices.

Jon Heshka, associate professor

Associate professor for diploma and degree students



Jon is a climber and former guide with seven years of experience coordinating search and rescue full-time in B.C. He's been a professor at Thompson Rivers University since 2002 and associate dean of law for four years. Jon specializes in risk management, adventure liability and the regulation and management of extreme sport. He's co-authored a university textbook

on outdoor adventure risk management and written nine book chapters, over 80 articles and presented at over 50 conferences world-wide.

He's co-chair of Outward Bound Canada's National Safety Committee, a member of the Outdoor Council of Canada's

Curriculum Committee, and a member of the Climbing Wall Association's Industry Practices Committee. Jon consults with all levels of government and the private sector. For example, he's co-written the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides' Post-Critical Incident Management Plan, reviewed Recreation Sites and Trails B.C.'s mountain bike risk management program, co-written the Public Avalanche Safety Program Review for the B.C. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and reviewed the Calgary Board of Education's manual on risk management for field trips.

Bridget Orsetti, assistant teaching professor

Program lead for canoe and sea kayaking



Bridget's passions lie in facilitating greatness and a sense of wonder in the outdoors. Her personal pursuits include mountain biking, hiking, sea kayaking, skate skiing and downhill skiing with family and friends.

Bridget's work in Indigenous tourism, time spent in remote communities, whitewater raft guiding, sea kayak guiding and owning her own businesses

have taken her from Arctic Canada, Haida Gwaii, Nepal and New Zealand. Bridget believes in remaining clear about the big picture and recognizing strengths in others while assessing risk, identifying opportunities and focusing ultimately on the growth and development of the person.

Collaborating to see a project to completion is Bridget's specialty! Greatness comes from collaboration. Through listening and communicating with each other she has led several teams in developing meaningful, long-term relationships in both her professional and personal lives.



Terry Palechuk, associate teaching professor

Associate teaching professor for degree students



Terry Palechuk has been an associate teaching professor in the Adventure Studies department at Thompson Rivers University for over 20 years. Terry has been active working, playing and guiding in the backcountry for over 35 years. He also holds certifications as an ACMG Ski Guide and Hiking Guide, as well as a Professional Member of the Canadian Avalanche Association (CAA) and has been

active instructing recreational avalanche courses as well as Professional Level 1 courses for the CAA.

Together with a degree in outdoor education, Terry has an MBA and has conducted research into the motivations for participation in the outdoors (mountaineering and skiing) and enjoys a practical approach to education both in the field and classroom.

Frederick Amyot, assistant teaching professor

Program lead for mountaineering, ice and rock climbing



Frederick Amyot is an ACMG/IFMGA Mountain Guide and a CAA professional member with a bachelor's degree in adventure tourism management, who has been guiding and instructing in the adventure industry for the past 25 years.

Fred has guided and instructed mountain sports throughout North America and Europe. He has guided in the heli-skiing industry for the

past 15 years with various companies in western Canada. Fred has been involved with the adventure studies department since 2008 and is now coordinating the mountain program: hiking, rock, ice and alpine climbing.

Fred is deeply invested in the mountain-guiding community through involvement with organizations like Avalanche Canada, the Revelstoke Climbing Access Society, the Alpine Club of Canada and the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. His passion lies in the mountains, and he loves to share his joy for guiding, climbing and skiing.

Tina Ryan, administrative assistant



Tina is of the ch'iyōne (wolf) clan from the Tahltan Nation in northern B.C. She came to the adventure studies department in 2022 with a background in entrepreneurship, business administration and adventure spirit.

"I love the people and the stoke that goes along with working in the adventure tourism industry. People are hyped to get outside and get moving," Tina greatly values the

importance of outdoor activity for mental and physical health and loves that she can help students to accomplish their goals in this regard.

"An adventure lifestyle is important to me. I think it's awesome that I now work in an industry where our alumni guide other people to find their own adventures out there."

Alexis Aitken, administrative assistant



Alexis graduated from the Adventure Guide diploma in 2020, igniting her passion for surfing and instructing. She pursued a Bachelor of Tourism Management at TRU, graduating in 2022 with a focus on tourism innovation, entrepreneurship, marketing and adventure. Over six seasons in Tofino, she thrived teaching surf lessons, bookkeeping for small businesses and fostering

relationships with TRU alumni. She has competed in both the Rip Curl CANAM and Queen of the Peak surfing competitions.

As a sessional instructor for the adventure guide surf program, Alexis is dedicated to teaching students the thrill of riding green waves, whether on a longboard or shortboard, always with a smile. "There's nothing like witnessing a student catch their first wave and seeing them feel absolutely stoked!"

In October 2024, Alexis started her role as one of the administrative assistants. She actively manages the program's social media platforms to showcase the exciting experiences of our students and instructors. Currently pursuing her MBA at TRU, Alexis will be graduating in 2026.



Samuel Beavers, equipment bay attendant



Returning for another year, Sam continued his role as the equipment bay attendant for the 2024-2025 academic year. Often compared to a librarian—but with a more adventurous twist—Sam manages the circulation of essential gear for adventure students. From backcountry skis and avalanche airbags to ice tools, whitewater kayaks, surfboards and mountaineering crampons, Sam

ensures students are outfitted for success in the field.

When he's not assisting students in the equipment bay, you'll find Sam instructing in the whitewater kayaking progression, studying diligently in the actual library or chasing waterfalls across British Columbia.

Maya Fish, equipment bay assistant



After graduating from the Adventure Guide diploma in 2024, Maya continued her educational journey in the Bachelor of Tourism Management (BTM) program. Reflecting on her experience, she shares: "My time in adventure has been some of the best of my life so far, with opportunities to learn new skills and connect with an amazing community."

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Maya worked as the gear bay assistant through TRU's Work Study program. This role offered a unique chance to stay connected to the adventure studies community while supporting students and troubleshooting a wide variety of gear-related challenges. Having spent years using the gear bay herself, Maya found the experience especially rewarding as she continues to grow in the BTM degree.

She also completed a practicum with Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing (MWHS), where she is training to become a ski guide—earning academic credit and gaining valuable hands-on experience in the vast tenure of MWHS.



Tyler Williamson, vehicle manager



Guiding in the Robson Valley since 2006, Tyler brings a wealth of experience to the TRU Adventure Studies department. As the river manager for Mount Robson Whitewater and a former co-owner of Stellar Descents Backcountry Adventures, he has been a valued sessional faculty member with the program since 2009.

Tyler's passion for whitewater was sparked at a young age through extensive canoeing and rafting expeditions that have taken him across the globe. He earned a Bachelor of Tourism Management from TRU in 2012 and is a lead instructor in the whitewater program, specializing in rafting and swift water rescue.

Tyler holds both the International Rafting Federation (IRF) Class 4/5 Instructor certification and the BC Rafting Outfitters Association Examiner credential, showcasing his commitment to safety, skill development and high industry standards.

EQUIPMENT BAY



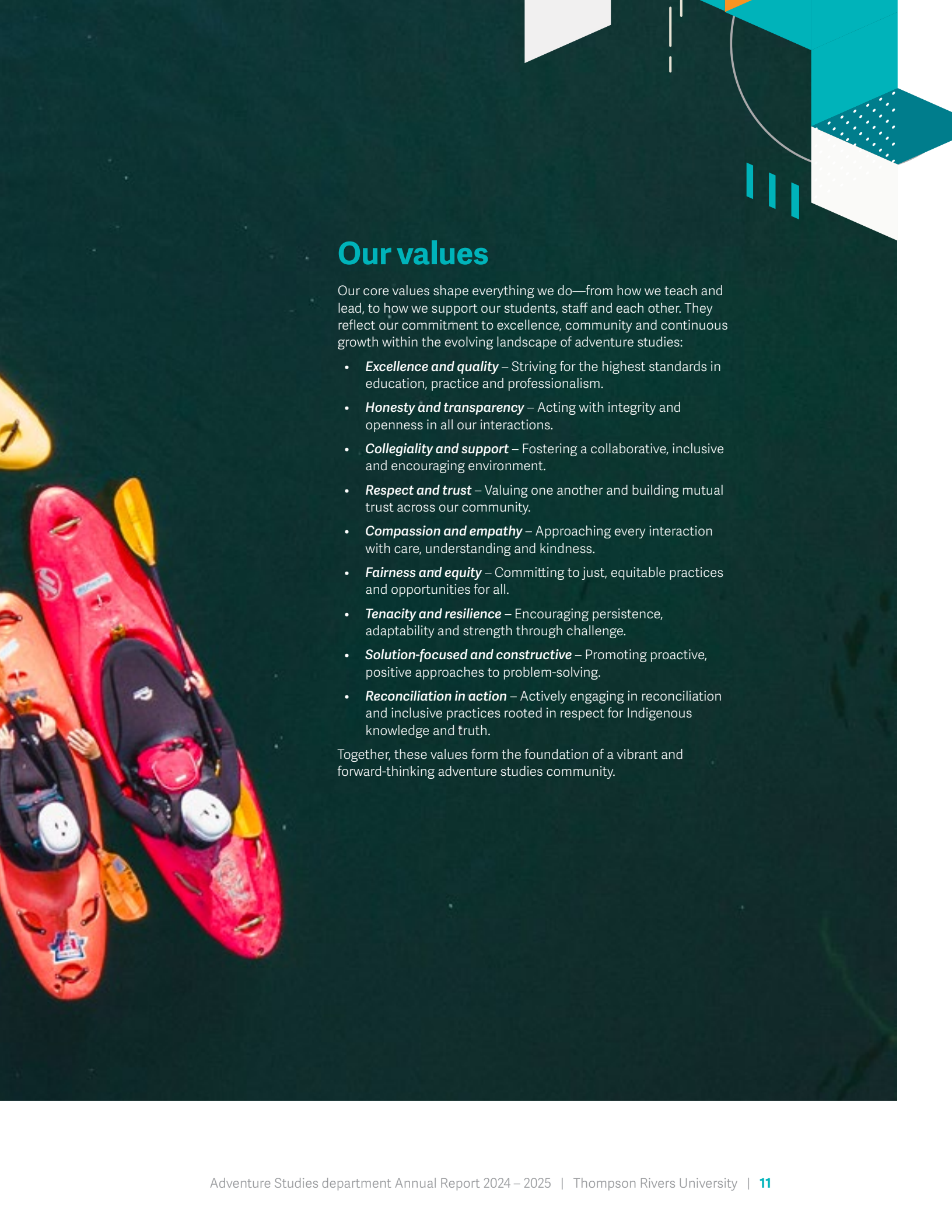
Mission and vision

The TRU Adventure Studies department has a long-standing legacy of leadership and innovation in guide training. Established in 1992 by founder Ross Cloutier, the department emerged with support from the provincial government, aligning with the launch of Tourism BC's Super, Natural British Columbia campaign. This funding positioned TRU as a centre of excellence in technical guide training—designed to support the emerging adventure tourism industry in the province.

Today, the department remains committed to its role as a premier educational hub for guides, professionals and adventure-based businesses. We are dedicated to:

- Serving as a centre of excellence for training and education in the adventure tourism sector.
- Delivering student-focused programs in adventure tourism, sports, experiential education and outdoor recreation.
- Managing risk responsibly, while recognizing the inherent challenges of adventure.
- Fostering a strong sense of community, culture and belonging within the department.
- Advancing knowledge and innovation across the adventure and outdoor education industries.





Our values

Our core values shape everything we do—from how we teach and lead, to how we support our students, staff and each other. They reflect our commitment to excellence, community and continuous growth within the evolving landscape of adventure studies:

- **Excellence and quality** – Striving for the highest standards in education, practice and professionalism.
- **Honesty and transparency** – Acting with integrity and openness in all our interactions.
- **Collegiality and support** – Fostering a collaborative, inclusive and encouraging environment.
- **Respect and trust** – Valuing one another and building mutual trust across our community.
- **Compassion and empathy** – Approaching every interaction with care, understanding and kindness.
- **Fairness and equity** – Committing to just, equitable practices and opportunities for all.
- **Tenacity and resilience** – Encouraging persistence, adaptability and strength through challenge.
- **Solution-focused and constructive** – Promoting proactive, positive approaches to problem-solving.
- **Reconciliation in action** – Actively engaging in reconciliation and inclusive practices rooted in respect for Indigenous knowledge and truth.

Together, these values form the foundation of a vibrant and forward-thinking adventure studies community.

Student training and development

Mapping our learning: field locations and program stats

The adventure program delivered 314 field days across diverse landscapes. Most courses took place in the Thompson Okanagan region of British Columbia's Southern Interior — a place deeply rooted in Indigenous culture and defined by grasslands, forests, mountain ranges and winding rivers. Additional courses explored the wild coastlines and lush rainforests of Vancouver Island, from Pacific Rim to Central Island. Some journeys extended beyond B.C.'s borders to the rugged peaks of Alberta's Canadian Rockies.

By the numbers:

- 26 unique destinations
- 28 total courses
- 314 days in the field
- Seven rivers and three coastal locations
- Two renowned climbing destinations and four mountain ranges
- Four national parks and two provincial parks



26

UNIQUE DESTINATIONS

**FOUR NATIONAL PARKS
AND
TWO PROVINCIAL PARKS**



DAYS IN THE FIELD

**28
TOTAL
COURSES**



**SEVEN RIVERS
AND
THREE COASTAL
LOCATIONS**



2
renowned climbing
destinations and

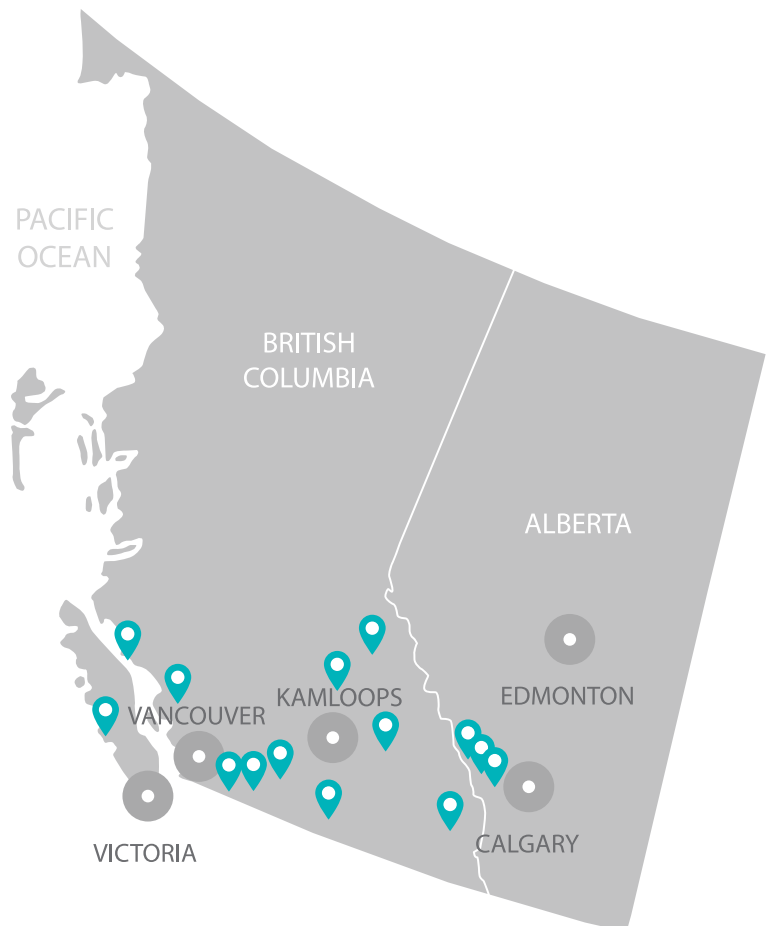


4
mountain ranges

As part of our commitment to travel and learn on, we have visited each of our fall and winter sites across a wide range of lands and communities we care for these places since

- **Squamish: Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw**
Rock 3
- **Clearwater River: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Kayak 1 & 3 and SRS Ropes
- **Wells Gray Provincial Park: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Wilderness Travel
- **Paul Lake Provincial Park: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Surf 3 (lifesaving portion)
- **Columbia Icefields Parkway, Jasper National Park: Treaty 6 and 8 Territories, and Lake Louise: Ho-run-num-nay**
Mountain 1 & 2
- **Clayoquot Sound: Tla o qu aht & Nuw-chah-nulth**
Sea Kayak 2
- **North and South Thompson River: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Canoe 1
- **Ucluelet: Yuuṭuʔiḥʔatḥ and Tofino: Načiks**
Surf 1
- **Robson Valley: Syilx**
SRT 4
- **Sun Peaks Resort: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Ski Skills

- **Wells Gray Provincial Park: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Ski Tour 1
- **Banff: Minhrpa, Glacier & Yoho National Parks: Ktunaxa and Secwépemc**
Ski Tour 2
- **Coquihalla Summit: Nlaka'pamux Nation**
Winter Camping
- **Canmore: Niitsítpiis-stahkoii ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ**
Ice Climbing
- **Quadra Island: Wei wai kai We wai kum**
Sea Kayak 1
- **Lake Louise: Ho-run-num-nay, Banff National Park: Minhrpa, and the Canadian Rockies**
Ski Tour 3
- **Chilliwack River: Stó:lō**
SRT 3
- **Shuswap: Secwepemc, Clearwater: Secwepemcúl'ecw, and Adams Rivers: : Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Kayak 4
- **Skaha: Snpinkt)**
Rock 2
- **Chilliwack: Stó:lō, Capilano: Skwxwú7mesh, and Adams Rivers: Secwepemcúl'ecw**
Kayak 2
- **Squamish: Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw**
Rock 4
- **Kootenay River: Syilx**
Raft 1 & 2
- **Ucluelet: Yuułuʔił'at̓h and Tofino: Načiks**
Surf 2 & 3





Practicums

Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing

We were very excited to have degree student Maya Fish join Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing (MWHS) for another year of work experience. Our groundbreaking partnership with MWHS offers a unique opportunity for adventure guide diploma graduates to transition seamlessly into the adventure major within the Bachelor of Tourism Management, all while working towards becoming a certified heli ski guide.

With a dynamic blend of classroom theory, online learning, fieldwork and hands-on work, students gain invaluable real-world experience. It is an extraordinary opportunity for students to blend their passion for skiing with a world-class education.

Maya joined guides training in November 2025 along with faculty member Jerry Isaak.



Featured sessional instructors

Chris Ryman

Sessional instructor for the whitewater kayak progression

"My experience as a sessional kayak instructor for TRU has been nothing short of incredible. Teaching here has allowed me to share my passion while exploring some of the most beautiful rivers in British Columbia, Washington and Ecuador. The students have been amazing—eager to learn, supportive of each other and always up for a challenge. It's rewarding to see their skills and confidence grow with each trip. I've also built strong bonds with the adventure department's faculty and staff; we share a deep respect for the river and for teaching. Every course feels like a new adventure, filled with unforgettable moments and breathtaking places. I am a coach and teacher, but always a student first. The lessons I have learned from fellow instructors and students have been profound and numerous. Each season, teaching at TRU makes me a better coach and person."

Kinley Aitken

Sessional instructor for the rock climbing progression

I started instructing at TRU around 2008 and since then, have had the privilege of working with hundreds of students, spanning 5 different courses in locations such as Squamish, Skaha, Marble Canyon, Smith Rock and Yosemite.

Often, Rock 1 will be students' first introduction to rock climbing and the time at which, for many, the seed of climbing infatuation is planted. Working alongside students from their early experiences of sport climbing (Rock 1), teaching trad climbing (Rock 2), multipitch climbing (Rock 3) and an introduction to guiding mentality and systems (Rock 4), for some, the Rock Expedition, I greatly enjoy witnessing students, not only learn the technical side of climbing, but also but also experiencing the personal effect climbing can have on our, relationship to ourselves, others and the wild places spend this time in.

It brings me immense joy to see the friendly faces of students that I have worked with out in the community, working, playing, and some going on to become guides and climbing partners.

I look forward to continuing my path as an instructor and mentor to the students of TRU and the adventures we will share.



Get to know our students: Demographic insights

Certificate students – 37

33 Canadian students:

- AB (two students) – Canmore
- B.C. (25 students) – 70 Mile House, Bowen Island, Chase, Kamloops (five), Maple Ridge, North Vancouver (three), Pemberton, Penticton (two), Qualicum Beach, Salt Spring Island (two), Victoria (three), Kelowna and Whistler (two)
- MB – Winnipeg
- ON (three students) – Ottawa, Rockland and London
- QC (three students) – Knowlton, Sant-Lazare, Vaudreuil-sur-le-Lac

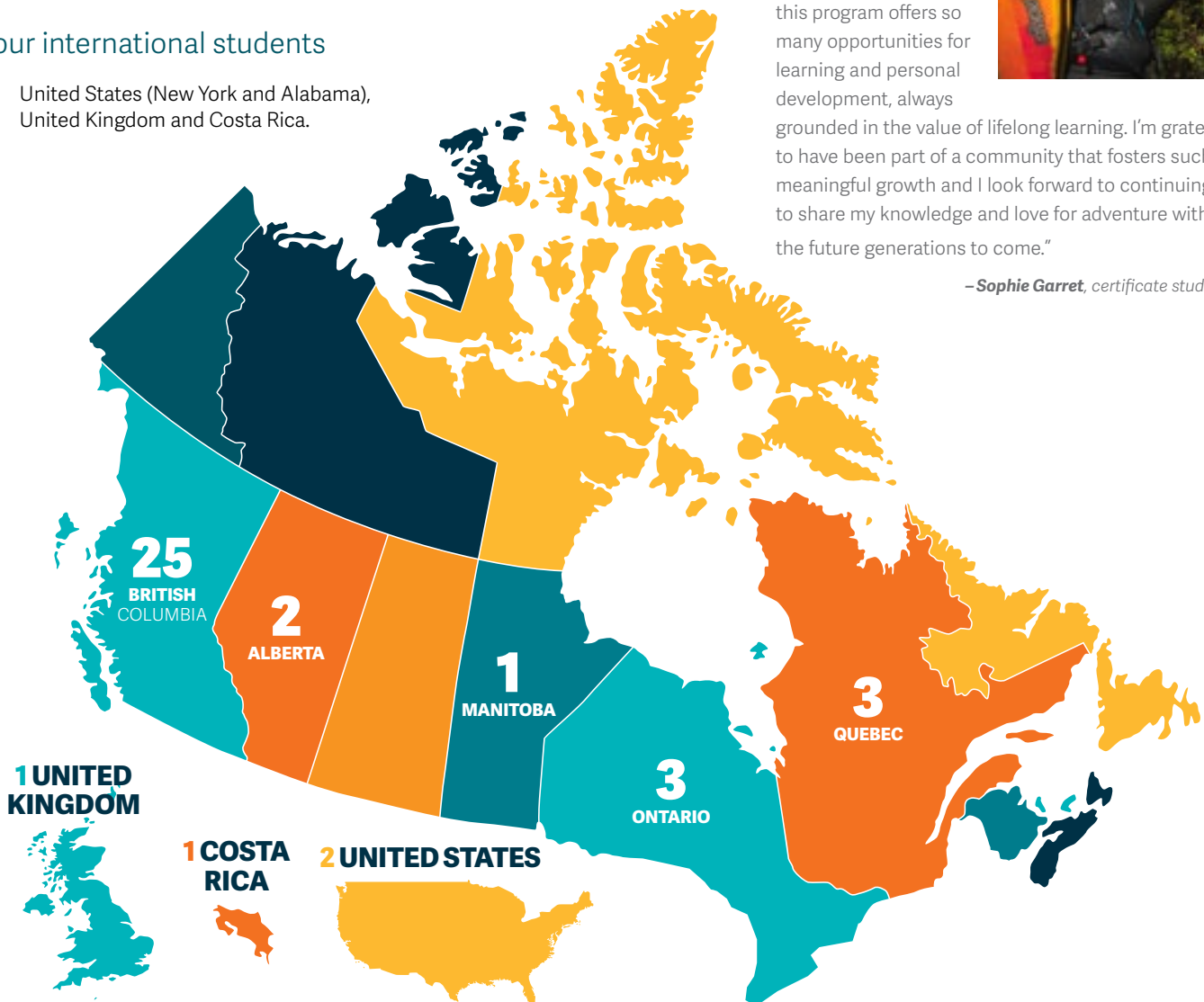
Four international students

- United States (New York and Alabama), United Kingdom and Costa Rica.

“What an incredible journey this past year in the certificate program has been. Coming from Ontario I wasn’t sure how I’d fit in, but from the moment I arrived the community of peers, instructors and shared adventures made me feel at home. This experience challenged me in ways I never expected, both mentally and physically, but the growth I’ve seen in myself has been deeply rewarding. The support and encouragement from those around me made all the difference.

Watching my friends grow alongside me in similar ways has been such an honour. Whether your passion lies in water or land, this program offers so many opportunities for learning and personal development, always grounded in the value of lifelong learning. I’m grateful to have been part of a community that fosters such meaningful growth and I look forward to continuing to share my knowledge and love for adventure with the future generations to come.”

– **Sophie Garret**, certificate student



Diploma students – 25

23 Canadian students:

- AB (Four students) – Stony Plain, Okotoks, Canmore and Cold Lake
- B.C. (13 students) – Comox, Coquitlam (three), Hope, Kamloops (two), North Vancouver, Pemberton, Surrey, Vancouver, Vernon, Victoria
- MB – Otterburne
- NS – Berwick and Halifax
- NT – Yellowknife
- ON (three students) – Toronto (two) and Oakville
- QC – Montreal

Two international students

- United States (Massachusetts) and Hong Kong.

“My time in the Adventure Studies diploma program at Thompson Rivers University has been nothing short of wonderful. While the technical skills and guiding experience have been invaluable, what I will forever be most grateful for is the community this program fosters. The connections you develop along the way, with both fellow students and faculty. Which are genuine, supportive and long-lasting. Some of my favourite memories aren’t just from the mountains, rivers or coastlines, but from the road in between: van rides to and from courses where laughter filled the air, stories were shared and friendships deepened. There was something about those long drives, the anticipation of an upcoming adventure and the reflection on the ones we just completed. It’s a place where you’re not only challenged to grow as a guide, but where you find amazing people.”



– Ash Pobereznik, diploma student





Diploma capstone expeditions

As both a graduate requirement and transformative milestone, second-year students undertake a self-directed, self-funded expedition—planned in collaboration with program instructors. These 15-day expeditions challenge students to apply their technical, leadership and planning skills in real-world settings. This year, five expeditions took place: three international and two within B.C., each reflecting the spirit of adventure, independence and professionalism that defines our program.

TRUSU expedition support

The TRU Student Union (TRUSU) generously provided a \$7,500 grant to be applied to student expenses on domestic expeditions. This year students on the ski expedition (Freshfield Icefields) and the whitewater expedition (Babine and Fraser rivers) were the beneficiaries of the TRUSU Grant.



Rock expedition – Orpierre, France

For the first time in over three decades—and the first time outside the U.S.—the Rock Expedition traveled to France, marking a milestone for adventure studies. This journey used rock climbing as a lens to explore a new country, culture, language and cuisine while advancing students' technical climbing skills.

Led by Fred Amyot, the group based themselves in the historic village of Orpierre, nestled where the Provence region meets the Southern Alps. Surrounded by steep limestone walls, students climbed multi-pitch routes with panoramic views—on one side, rolling lavender fields and apple orchards; on the other, snow-covered alpine peaks.

Challenging weather conditions prompted the group to continue their journey southwest to the world-renowned cliffs of Les Calanques, perched dramatically above the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

Rock Expedition 2025 was not only a technical and physical achievement—it was an unforgettable cultural and personal experience for all involved.



Read more about the Rock Expedition [here](#).

Ski expedition – Freshfield Iceway, B.C.

Based on the Freshfield Icefield—roughly 50 kilometres north of Golden, B.C.—the 2025 Ski Expedition offered students an immersive, basecamp-style experience in complex alpine terrain. Designed as a capstone to their training, the trip was led by ACMG ski guides Ari Bruns and Chelsea Sullivan and included six students.

This expedition provided hands-on experience in ski guiding, whiteout navigation and high-angle travel while deepening students' understanding of logistics, group dynamics and mountain safety. From route planning to risk assessment, students put their technical and decision-making skills to the test in real conditions.

Expedition highlights included summiting Mt. Gilgit, navigating in storm conditions and sharing meals in the Mountain Hardware "Space Station" dome tent. The experience not only met academic outcomes—it solidified the students' readiness for careers in ski guiding, avalanche operations and alpine leadership.





Sea kayak expedition – Belize, Central America

Led by instructor Bridget Orsetti, this all-female expedition travelled to Belize for a remote sea kayak journey that was equally challenging and transformative. Paddling through three protected marine areas—including sections of the Belize Barrier Reef—students experienced a landscape rich in biodiversity, cultural connection and personal growth.

Long days on the water included open crossings, impromptu swims and snorkel breaks to manage the tropical heat and humidity. The group was warmly welcomed by local Belizeans, sharing unforgettable meals of conch ceviche, grilled barracuda and handmade tortillas. The expedition was a vivid lesson in reciprocity, resilience and the power of place-based learning.

Student quotes:

- *As we paddled to camp, I found myself reflecting on a thriving ecosystem, a welcome change. What can this teach us? How can we implement this level of environmental protection back home?*
- *Heading to bed happy, curious and eyes wide open with what the rest of this magical trip will hold.*
- *This trip is teaching many things, about ourselves, each other, the world and different ways to operate within it.*
- *I think still think it's crazy to all of us that we planned this trip months ago and now we're on it. I will forever be grateful for this trip and the people on it!*
- *It's our job as guides to teach the rest of the world to take care of the earth.*



Surf expedition – El Gigante, Nicaragua

Sharman Learie and four students travelled from Kamloops to the coastal town of El Gigante, Nicaragua. After nearly 30 hours of travel, the group arrived just in time to catch the sunset and dip their toes in the Pacific.

With daytime temperatures reaching 34 C and ocean temperatures around 29 C, conditions were hot—but ideal for surf. Thanks to consistent swell, the group surfed 13 out of 14 days, exploring breaks such as Playa Gigante's "Unicorn Point," Playa Amarillo, Playa Colorado, Magnificent Rock and the boat-access reef at El Peñon.

This immersive field experience gave students firsthand practice in leading an international surf expedition—from managing logistics and navigating customs to connecting with local communities and bartering for fresh seafood.

With new skills, lasting memories and a deeper appreciation for surf culture, the group returned home inspired and eager to keep exploring waves around the world.

White water expedition – Babine and Fraser Rivers, B.C.

Led by Simon Ward-Able with support from TRU alumni Sam Beavers and Brooke Zelinski, five students set off on May 1 from Kamloops to Smithers, B.C. for the 2025 Whitewater Expedition. After a 12-hour drive, gear prep and a bumpy shuttle, the group launched on the Babine River—likely the first of the season, according to the BC Parks Area Supervisor.

Running at a healthy 69 CMS, the Babine delivered quality class II–III water through steep canyons and thick forests. By day three, the group faced the trip's biggest rapids—including Grizzly Drop, Sphincter 1 and 2, and Kiseegas Canyon—with nerves high and stoke higher. New high-water lines kept things spicy before reaching the Skeena confluence. The final day was a 65-kilometre push to Hazelton: a long stretch of splashy water followed by plenty of floating.

After reloading in Smithers, the group headed to the Chilcotin. Starting at Bull Canyon, they floated past the dramatic aftermath of a recent landslide, navigating shifting banks, fresh hazards and fun rapids. A muddy gear haul at Big Creek gave way to their final night at the Fraser confluence—staring out at a river 50 times the size of the Chilcotin. A fantastic expedition and a reminder of the ever-changing power of B.C.'s wild rivers..



Student accomplishments

Student awards

We are deeply grateful to our generous donors for supporting adventure studies students on their educational journeys at TRU. These awards, often given based on faculty recommendations, recognize students for their dedication and achievement in specific disciplines. Recent awards include the Mustang Powder Indigenous Adventure Studies Award, the Learie/Sprott Adventure Studies Award and the TRUSU Adventure Studies Award.

By the numbers:

- 19 awards granted to students (Four BTM degree students, 10 diploma students and five certificate students)
- \$42,651.94 in awards given out
- 13 award donors



To support our students financially, please explore [TRU's giving opportunities](#). Your generosity helps remove barriers, recognize achievement and empower the next generation of leaders in adventure, tourism and outdoor education.

19
AWARDS
GRANTED TO STUDENTS



13
AWARD
DONORS

\$42,651.94
IN AWARDS GIVEN OUT





Industry certifications

Adventure Guide certificate and diploma students at TRU graduate with an impressive suite of certifications from leading provincial and national adventure associations. These credentials boost employability and provide a strong foundation for guiding careers. Diploma students can earn over 17 industry certifications and, depending on course selection, may also ladder into the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG).



224
TOTAL
STUDENT CERTIFICATIONS

By the numbers:

- 224 total student certifications
- 124 total water certifications
- 30 total mountain certifications

124 TOTAL
WATER
CERTIFICATIONS



Certifying bodies

We partner with leading certifying bodies to ensure our students graduate with industry-recognized credentials. These accredited certifications validate their skills, enhance their credibility and demonstrate that their training meets the highest standards—setting them up for success in the adventure tourism and guiding industries.

30 TOTAL
MOUNTAIN
CERTIFICATIONS





Celebrating milestones: the annual pin party

The department proudly presented 14 prestigious pins to adventure studies diploma graduates from the following years:

- **2023** – Kady Wellman, Zoe Kallio, Brooke Zelinski, Joshua Jonasson and Fisher Learie.
- **2024** – Cayley Willcox, Marcelo Figueiredo, Alana Norie, Josh McMurray, Madison Adams, Austin Williams, Kai McGrady, Rylie Denis and Natalie Rude.

Additionally, one pin was presented to Jill Weenink for graduating the certificate in 2019.

Faculty and students were thrilled to welcome back so many familiar faces — with alumni spanning more than two decades of adventure studies history! While time has taken us down different paths, the sense of community remains strong—a true reflection of the lifelong friendships forged in this program.





Community service and volunteer work

TRU route development project – Far away wall



In conjunction with Skaha Rock Climbing Adventure (Penticton, B.C.), the Adventure Studies department organized the fifth edition of the community development in Skaha on Oct. 12 and 13, 2024. The Adventure Studies department has been using this area since its inception in 1992. The goal is to give back to the climbing community by improving a specific area of Skaha each year by retrofitting and improving climbing routes and sites.

Skaha Provincial Park is a nationally renowned climbing area that attracts over 100,000 visitors annually, where many issues are at stake: endangered species, user conflict and the reconciliation process with First Nations. Wendy Poppe, superintendent of Skaha Provincial Park, started this community project by welcoming and lecturing our students on these current issues arising in the park and describing potential job opportunities with the service.

Over the years, our community development renovated Fern Gully, Another Buttress, Red Tail, Go Anywhere Wall and Diamond Back, improving the area for the entire climbing community. This year, our efforts were dedicated to improving 'Far Away wall' and included opening the following new routes:

Ou es-tu Fred? 5.7 / 13 bolts / 28 meters

New route: Bouldery start past 3 bolts to ledge, then up corrugated face to top.

FA: Fred Amyot and Fred Carriere

Hiking School 5.7 / 10 bolts / 27 meters

New route: Easy face climbing leads to a crack/corner crux at the top (immediately left of rose in the corner route).

FA: Nathan Cox and Oscar Green

Hot Butter 5.7 / Mixed Gear / 3 bolts / 30 meters

Retro-cleaned and retro-bolted route: Follow left-facing corner crack from base, using bolts when necessary.

Route cleaners: Michael Maser and Olivia Wynn Dulvy

Revolutionary Tea Party 5.7+ / Mixed Gear / 4 bolts / 30 meters

New route (Retro-cleaned and Retro-bolted): Start in crack at base and climb straight up, past ledge, through incipient left facing corners, then straight up corrugated face holds to top.

FA: Cyrus Huang and Elizabeth Jarry



Research by undergraduate and graduate students

The TRU Bold Academic Plan positions research as a cornerstone of student learning, emphasizing inquiry-based education that's rooted in place, community and real-world impact. In adventure studies, research is a keyway students engage deeply with pressing issues in environment, health and outdoor leadership—aligned with TRU's research priorities.

By the numbers:

- Nine adventure alumni moved into degree programs – Seven BTM and two BIS
- Three BTM students graduated from the 2024-2025 school year

The following adventure guide graduates completed undergraduate research as part of their degree requirements, showcasing the integration of field-based experience and academic inquiry:

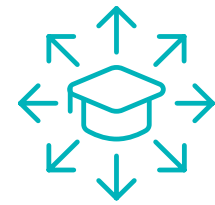
Bachelor of Tourism Management

- **Maya Fish (2023):** Exploring how the adventure industry interacts with land. Her research focuses on how the industry can foster deeper connections and reciprocity between people and place, with the goal of contributing to a more sustainable future for adventure tourism.

Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies

- **Alana Norie (2023):** Earned a \$6,000 undergraduate research award from TRU to pursue their final thesis. This research project examines the co-created stories of belonging, joy, and resistance of two-spirit, queer and trans youth and their communities in land-based programming. - Student accomplishment photo folder of Alana UREAP
- **Zoe Kallio (2023):** Successfully defended her thesis titled River Relationships: Ripples Effects of Rights, Reciprocity and Relations.

9
ADVENTURE ALUMNI
MOVED INTO
DEGREE PROGRAMS



7 BTM
AND
2 BIS

3
ADVENTURE ALUMNI
BTM STUDENTS
GRADUATED FROM THE
2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR



Graduate students

We're proud of our alumni who have continued their academic journey through graduate studies at TRU:

- **Alexis Aitken (2020) – business administration:** Her graduate project focuses on the development of a Master's degree in tourism at TRU, with an emphasis on marketing, business operations, entrepreneurship and experience and product development. The objective is to design a program that aligns with current and emerging needs in the tourism and adventure tourism sectors while supporting TRU's commitment to place-based, experiential and career-connected learning.
- **Samuel Beavers (2022) – environmental science:** His thesis investigates if specific bodily intensities elicited through participation in commodified adventure tourism experiences correlate with a philosophical mood outcome called "Reenchantment", which is best described as a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life. He proposes that an individual who is momentarily reenchanting with both their self and the world may experience a reaffirmation of their sense of purpose in the world, which would lead to higher life satisfaction.



Department impact

Scholarship and faculty research

SoTL Grant

Congratulations to Bridget Orsetti, Simon Ward-Able and Jerry Isaak for receiving Thompson Rivers University's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) award.

This prestigious award recognizes faculty who engage in research to enhance student learning and improve post-secondary education through innovative teaching practices.

- Bridget is exploring the experiences of students who have participated in the Indigenous Field School. Her research aims to strengthen place-based learning rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
- Simon is investigating the structure, impact and value of mentorship in the whitewater kayak program, with the goal of refining this unique learning opportunity.
- Jerry is examining how non-technical skills—such as leadership, decision-making, communication, and cognitive readiness—are taught and assessed in adventure guide training.

Their dedication to evidence-based teaching practices continues to strengthen the adventure studies and tourism management programs at TRU.



Publications and professional contributions

Jon Heshka

Heshka, J. (2024). Crisis in Alpine Recreational Sport. In B.E. Minaker, D. Sheptak & J.J. Zhang (Eds.), *Crisis Management and Sports – Global Perspective*, Routledge.

Heshka, J. (2025). Risk Management for Guides and Adventure Businesses. In G. Pomfret & C. Cater (Eds.), *International Handbook of Adventure Tourism*, Routledge.

Heshka, J. (January 10, 2025). NCAA Rule Change Seismically Shifts Hockey Landscape. *Sports Litigation Alert*.

Heshka, J. (March 21, 2025). Recent Budget Cuts to Search and Rescue will have Massive Impact. *Sports Litigation Alert*.

'Risk and Crisis Communications Before and After a Critical Incident'. *Wilderness Risk Management Conference 2024*. Portland, OR. 18 October 2024.

'Sustainability of Alpine Huts in Canada'. University of Maribor, Slovenia (online). February 11, 2025.

'Outdoor Education and Recreation in North American Universities and Colleges'. *Outdoor Sports Conference*. Dali, Yunnan China (video recorded). 24 October 2024.

Project lead on a mountain bike policy review report for B.C Ministry of Environment and Parks.

Wrote a preliminary review re *Piette v. The Whitmarsh Corporation, et al, v. Jump City Providence, LLC*.

Wrote an expert witness final report re *Brandon Cantrell v. Airborne Extreme*.

Jerry Isaak

Isaak, J. (2025). The power and peril of smartphones and social media in avalanche terrain. In S. Beames & P. Maher (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Mobile Technology, Social Media and the Outdoors*. (pp. 147-158). Routledge.

Cossette-Beaulieu, J., & Isaak, J. (2024). Introducing a daily stress assessment for guides in a heli-skiing operation. *The Avalanche Review*, 43(1) 34-35.

Isaak, J. (2024). Cultures of risk management. *The Avalanche Review*, 42(4), 48.

Isaak, J. (2025, February). Teaching with Objects. *Teaching Practices Colloquium*. Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, British Columbia.

Isaak, J. (2024, October). Smartphones & situational awareness in the backcountry: A wealth of information / a poverty of attention. *Northwest Snow & Avalanche Workshop*. Seattle, Washington.

Industry service

Adventure studies faculty are leaders in their respective disciplines, bringing deep expertise earned through years of field experience and academic pursuit. Their knowledge is recognized not only in the classroom but also through active participation and leadership roles within key industry associations. This connection ensures our programs remain aligned with evolving industry standards.

Sharman Learie

- Sprott Foundation – Board member
- Northern Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Collaboration – Grant committee member
- CoastSmart Canada – Board member

Simon Ward-Able

- BC Whitewater – Board member
- TRU EDI and Anti-Racism – Faculty committee member

Bridget Orsetti

- ITAC Original, Original Program – Reviewer
- TRU Coyote Brings Food – Department committee member
- TRU Academic Integrity Committee – FACT representative
- TRUFA Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenization – Department representative

Fred Amyot

- Revelstoke Climbing Access Society – Committee member
- Avalanche Canada – Avalanche skills training committee member

James Rodger

- British Columbia River Outfitters Association – Board president
- International Rescue Instructors Association, Advisory Board – Board member

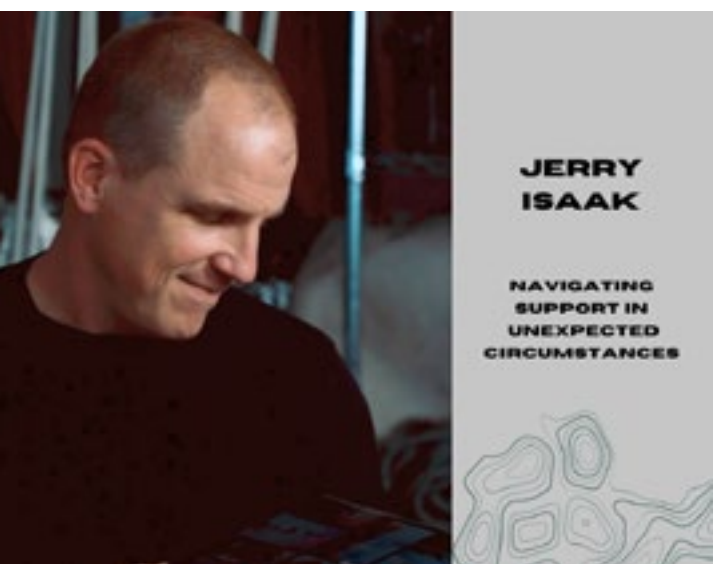
Jon Heshka

- Outward Bound Canada, National Safety Committee – Member and alternate chair
- Algonquin College Outdoor Adventure Advisory Committee – Member and vice-chair
- Outdoor Council of Canada, Curriculum Committee – Member
- Wilderness Climate Action & Resilience Lab – Member
- Legal Affairs Commission of the UIAA (International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation) – Canadian representative

Terry Palechuk

- Canadian Avalanche Association, Avalanche Educator Curriculum Development – Team member
- Avalanche Canada – Avalanche skills training committee member
- Backcountry Lodges of BC Association – Board of Directors member





Beyond the Edge

In January, the debut of *Beyond the Edge*, a film created and produced by [Bighorn Productions](#), a company run by 2024 TRU graduates Taylor Ramljak and Rylie Denis, was released. The film also features contributions from Brock Heshka, Carson Wright and many other adventure studies students.



This compelling documentary series highlights the stories of three accomplished mountain professionals.

Jerry is an associate teaching professor in TRU's Faculty of Adventure, Culinary Arts and Tourism and the program lead for the adventure studies ski tour program.

He is also a member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides and the American Mountain Guides Association as a ski guide.

Madeline grew up in Nelson, B.C. before moving to Revelstoke, B.C. in 2009. She was part of the first team to complete the full ski traverse of the Selkirk Mountains.

She is a member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) as a ski, hiking, and rock-climbing guide and serves as an examiner for the ACMG Training and Assessment Program.

Will is a living legend who continues to push boundaries in the world of ice climbing. He has established some of the hardest mixed climbing routes in the world and has won several titles at the X Games.

He is an ACMG alpine guide and a Red Bull Canada ice climbing athlete. Residing in Jasper, A.B., Will operates his full-time guiding services right in his backyard.

Their experiences shed light on the complexities of injury and trauma in the mountains and on the river. Through their vulnerability, they reveal their personal stories beyond the psychological toll that incidents, injuries and loss can have on an athlete's well-being. By sharing their journeys, these mountain professionals offer a profound look at the path to healing, resilience and the reclaiming of mental and emotional strength after trauma.

"We hope this story not only inspires those in the outdoor industry to talk more openly about incidents, mental health and support, but also encourages future adventure studies students to pursue personal dream projects. You never know what doors will open along the way," said Rylie.



TRU campus engagement

ADVG 1276 visits TRU MakerSpace

Second-year diploma students in ADVG 1276 Business and Marketing for Adventure Operations participated in their annual tour and workshop at the TRU Makerspace (C7eilekstén). This hands-on session introduces students to the innovative tools and resources available to support both academic projects and personal creative pursuits.

Industry guest speaker: Michelle Brown

Michelle Brown from the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada visited ADVG 1010, ADVG 2040 and ADVG 4210 to share her expertise in marketing and business development. Her insights offered students a valuable industry perspective and highlighted best practices in Indigenous tourism.



Guest: Alexis Brown from CELT

Alexis Brown from the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) joined ADVG 2040 The Business of Adventure Tourism as a guest “dragon” for the class’ Dragon’s Den-style business pitch presentations. Her feedback and expertise provided students with a real-world lens on entrepreneurship and business development.

Exploring innovation in education: Bridget Orsetti presents at TRU AI Symposium

Bridget Orsetti presented at the TRU AI Symposium hosted by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), sharing insights on the integration of artificial intelligence in the second-year Business of Adventure course. Her presentation highlighted innovative approaches to using AI as a learning and instructional tool in adventure tourism education.

TIMCW Day in Chu Chua with Simpchw Resource Group

In the fall, students from the BTM and master’s programs were invited to participate in a trail ride and natural resource symposium hosted by the Simpcw Resource Group in Chu Chua. Faculty members Bridget, Jerry and James accompanied four students to this important community event, which focused on land use, stewardship, research and resource management issues affecting the community and surrounding areas. The group was honoured to be invited to a community dinner following the event, fostering meaningful connections and cultural exchange.

ADVG 4090 students visit Chu Chua for nature and community-based development

Students enrolled in ADVG 4090 Nature and Community-Based Development course traveled to Chu Chua where they were warmly hosted by Tom Eustache, trail builder and member of the Simpcw People. Tom guided the class along the mountain bike trails sharing his insights.

Student recruitment

Valleyview Secondary outdoor education program collaboration

Adventure studies faculty continued to support local youth and outdoor education initiatives. In Fall 2024, Fred and Terry visited Valleyview Secondary to support the outdoor education program led by Andrea Baillee. Later in the semester, Simon Ward-Able brought students from ADVG 4040 Programming Experiential Activities to lead three sessions focused on adventure skills and leadership development. One of the sessions was held at McConnell Lake which provided high school students with hands-on experience in an outdoor setting while giving TRU students the opportunity to practice teaching and facilitation.

Careers in Adventure Discover Day – Discover day with SD 73

On May 22, the Adventure Studies department hosted a Careers in Adventure Discover Day for students from SD73. Led by alumni Sam Beavers and Zoe Kallio, alongside faculty member Simon Ward-Able, the group took 16 students canoeing and hiking at McConnell Lake. Participants also learned how to cook using backcountry stoves and open-fire techniques. The event offered a glimpse into the world of adventure tourism and outdoor education, sparking curiosity and excitement about future opportunities in the field.

Outreach on Vancouver Island

Bridget Orsetti represented the Adventure Studies department on a fall recruitment trip across Vancouver Island, engaging with both high school and post-secondary students. Highlights included a day spent kayaking and presenting to Brentwood College School's Outdoor Education class, as well as delivering a presentation at the post-secondary event hosted by St. Michael's University School in Victoria. Bridget also visited the Explore Outdoor Education program at G.P. Vanier Secondary in the Comox Valley and connected with first-year tourism students at North Island College.



Outdoor adventure and travel trade shows

Adventure studies faculty, alumni and students represented TRU at several major outdoor and adventure expos across Canada in 2025:

- James Rodger attended the Vancouver Outdoor Adventure Show at the Convention Centre, accompanied by certificate student Elisa Ehro and alumnus Shane Derry (2019).
- Jon Heshka and alumnus Kris Nelson (2024) represented the department in Calgary at the Stampede Park/BMO Centre.
- Sharman Learie travelled to Toronto to connect with prospective students at the International Centre.
- Fred Amyot and alumnus Valerie Bouchard (2019) showcased Adventure Studies at the Palais des Congrès in Montréal.

These national events helped connect with future students and promote TRU's position as a leader in adventure education.

Building partnerships with CEGEP Gaspésie

Fred Amyot visited CEGEP Gaspésie where he delivered a guest lecture to students, facilitated a rescue workshop and met with faculty from their adventure department. The visit laid the groundwork for future collaboration between TRU and CEGEP Gaspésie, strengthening ties between adventure education institutions in western and eastern Canada.

This immersive experience fostered meaningful dialogue between students, faculty and community, deepening understanding of Indigenous stewardship and local land use.



TRU department collaborations



LEAP and adventure studies collaboration

As part of student's final project in ADVG 4040, nine BTM degree students collaborated with the LEAP program to design and deliver engaging outdoor experiences for TRU students.

One group hosted a whitewater kayaking and swift water rescue session at the TCC pool, introducing participants to core paddling skills and safety techniques. The second group led a sunset hike to Gibraltar Rock at Paul Lake, complete with hot chocolate, snacks around a campfire and a guided evening of star and moon gazing. Both events were well-received by attendees and praised by LEAP coordinator James Gjaltema, highlighting the strength of peer-led experiential programming.

"Inspired by the past success of the AdventureU program, LEAP and adventure studies connected to explore collaboration opportunities. Ideas began to percolate during initial discussions at the student run Common Grounds Coffee Shop. Mutual interest, vision and benefits were talked about over hot drinks."

James from LEAP shared:

The first stimulating results were served up by Adventure Studies students grinding out a class project. The tasteful activities included a kayak lesson and a night hike. Tickets sold out in seconds! Student were amped and ready for more.

Soon, more initiatives were brewing. With funding support from the TRU Level-Up program, four students were involved in a special project to develop and lead a variety of new LEAP activities. New perspectives and ideas helped infuse new flavors and unique blends of activities into the LEAP program.

An evening cross country ski lesson was offered at Stake Lake. Students enjoyed hot chocolate, roasting marshmallows, hotdogs and some tasty veggie chili in a fun outdoor environment.

With progression in mind, another kayak lesson provided students with an opportunity to develop additional paddling skills. Plans include a natural flow into more advanced activities in moving water, possibly even an overnight river expedition.

The timing provided an express challenge for the Adventure Studies students to quickly create excursions to take place during the winter months. Working well under pressure, professional quality solutions continued to pour out of the project.

The next activity was a trip to see frozen waterfalls in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Due to icy conditions and the remote location, safety precautions were an even more important part of the planning process. The adventure studies department delivered additional gear, equipment and support to ensure success. Building on the theme of collaboration, we made use of the TRU Wells Gray Education and Research Centre as our base to explore the park at McConnell Lake, an outdoor skills experience gave participants the chance to learn how to build campfires, set up tents and learn the essentials to prepare for hiking and camping. Moving forward,

the collaboration continues with sharing ideas, resources and ongoing teamwork. Future plans include expanding programming partnerships to produce quality activities that provide participants with a shot of adrenaline paired with learning and skills development. LEAP will have increased variety, capacity and connections. ADVG will have more opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience while developing leadership, planning and organizational skills.

RIIPEN grant partnership

The Adventure Studies department in collaboration with LEAP, successfully secured a RIIPEN grant to support student-led outdoor programming. This opportunity enabled five students to design, plan and deliver a variety of outdoor experiences for LEAP and the broader TRU student community.

Each participating student received \$1,400 through the grant as recognition for their contribution to the project. Trips included a cross-country ski outing at Overlander Ski Club, a Wells Gray waterfall tour, an introduction to whitewater kayaking and a backcountry skills workshop at McConnell Lake.

Building on this success, students also developed several upcoming trips scheduled for fall 2025, such as rafting excursions, camping adventures and night hikes.



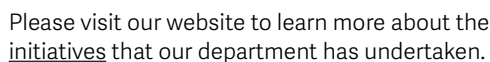
Adventure, Truth and Reconciliation in Secwepemcul'ecw

The department shares the TRC's belief that education must remedy the gaps in historical knowledge that perpetuates ignorance and racism and that education is the key to reconciliation.

Students on surfing courses are mentored by Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (ᑭᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ) Guardians about their history and culture and how recreationalists and instructors can be good allies and help support Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation.

Students on sea kayaking courses learn about the guiding principles which underpin Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve. These guiding principles are based on ethics and values from Haida law.

TRU has also developed the Coyote Project, which is a pan-institutional program to accelerate Indigenization at TRU. Adventure Studies is highly involved in the Coyote Project and has received funding to work with the Simpcw First Nation community in studying the Chu Chua Cottonwood Provincial Park ecosystem along the North Thompson River.





International Indigenous Tourism Conference (IITC) 2025

In February 2025, students from the Bachelor of Tourism Management program volunteered at the International Indigenous Tourism Conference held in Montreal. This valuable opportunity was facilitated by adventure studies faculty member Bridget Orsetti, whose strong relationships within the Indigenous tourism industry helped create this immersive learning experience. Thanks to financial support from the student union, the students were able to travel to Montreal, where they participated in this extraordinary event, gaining firsthand insights into the complexities and opportunities within Indigenous tourism.

Their reflections offer an insightful and personal view of the impact of the event on their understanding of Indigenous cultures, tourism, and personal biases. This report synthesizes their thoughts and provides an overview of the key takeaways from the conference.

Key insights and reflections:

1. Challenging assumptions

Students learned to question their biases about Indigenous tourism, recognizing the deep cultural authenticity beyond tourism as a transaction.

2. Growth through vulnerability

The emotional honesty of speakers helped students see culture as an emotional journey, not just intellectual, in a space where mistakes were welcomed as learning.

3. Power of relationships

Building trust and personal connections was highlighted as essential for meaningful reconciliation and decolonization efforts.

4. Matriarchy and female leadership

Students were inspired by the strong presence and leadership of Indigenous women entrepreneurs shaping the future of the industry.

5. Applied learning

Seeing classroom concepts come to life at the conference helped students connect theory with real-world Indigenous tourism practices.

6. Challenges in inclusion and sustainability

Questions arose about expanding Indigenous tourism beyond popular hubs and the need to address its long-term cultural and economic impacts.

7. Commitment to ongoing learning

Students recognized the complexity of Indigenous issues and committed to decolonizing their thinking and deepening their understanding moving forward.





ADVG and IBT

Jerry Isaak wrapped up another course with Indigenous Backcountry Training (IBT) this past winter in April at Mustang Powder Cat Skiing located in the heart of the Monashee mountains.



"I had the privilege of co-instructing the AST1 curriculum with ACMG Ski Guide and Avalanche Canada forecaster Zoe Ryan. I guided participants under the leadership of TRU Adventure Studies alumni and Mustang Powder Lead Guide Bruno Dupere (2006), Jerry.

One event that stands out to me during the week was a smudging ceremony which I was honoured to participate in, led by Tim Patterson. This was a new experience for me. I learned about this profound and ancient practice that has so much meaning and significance. It served as a connection to the land and to the people we were with."



Read our blog from last year's course [here](#).



Mammut and Indigenous backcountry training

Indigenous Backcountry Training (IBT) is an organization founded by adventure studies alum Dylan Murray (2020). IBT focuses on backcountry skiing and avalanche awareness. Dylan is excited to announce a special initiative with Mammut, a company renowned for their high-performance adventure gear.

"We are excited to announce a special initiative within this collaboration: providing top-quality gear to three outstanding students from Thompson Rivers University's Adventure Studies program. This effort supports Indigenous youth and young adults pursuing careers in outdoor exploration, safety and leadership. By equipping these emerging leaders with Mammut's cutting-edge technical gear, we are investing in their success and empowering them to thrive in the backcountry and beyond," said Dylan.

MAMMUT®



Why this matters:

This partnership not only provides critical gear but also supports the personal and professional growth of these future outdoor leaders. "We believe in equipping young Indigenous adventurers with the skills and tools they need to succeed in the outdoors," says Dylan. "Mammut's world-class gear will help ensure they stay safe, empowered and ready for anything."

Meet the students:

Erin Rautenstrauch – Certificate student

Erin is passionate about backcountry safety and the Pro 35 Removable Airbag 3.0 will give her the confidence to explore more challenging terrain. "An avalanche bag would greatly enhance my safety in the backcountry," Erin says. "Being in nature offers me peace and a sense of connection and this gear will help me explore untouched areas with more security."

Frederic Carriere – Diploma student

A proud Métis from Manitoba, Frederic dreams of becoming an ACMG ski guide and the Pro 35 Removable Airbag 3.0 will enhance his safety in the backcountry. "The right gear gives me peace of mind as I work towards my goal," Frederic shares. "Growing up, adventure was a way to connect with my roots and now I want to represent my people as I climb and explore the world."

Denaya Bennett – Certificate student

Denaya is focused on both climbing and skiing, and the Eiger Free Pro HS Women's Bibs and Trion 50 Pack are the perfect additions to her growing gear collection. "The Trion 50 Pack is perfect for my skiing and mountaineering goals," Denaya explains. "I have always been drawn to adventure and the mountains give me a sense of fulfillment I cannot find anywhere else. These pieces will help me reach new heights."



Application instructions

Adventure Guide certificate

Get ready to turn your passion into a profession.

At Thompson Rivers University, applying to the Adventure Guide certificate is your first step toward an exciting career in the adventure industry. This one-of-a-kind program offers a blend of technical training and leadership development through immersive, real-world experience—from ski to touring and rock climbing to sea kayaking and whitewater rafting.

Because this program is competitive, applicants are evaluated on their experience, skill development and program fit. The application process includes submitting a resume, cover letter, references and a detailed log of your outdoor experience. You'll also need to attend a [program information session](#). These sessions are available online, offer valuable insight into the program, application process and student expectations.

Applicants must be 19 years of age or older at the start of the program and meet specific educational requirements. Select applicants will also be invited for an interview with faculty. If you're under 19, reach out to us to learn about Pathways to Adventure to build up your skills and experience for the adventure guide program.



Applications for 2026-2027 open Oct. 1, 2025.

Accepted students must complete medical forms, sign risk and liability waivers and be prepared for physically demanding coursework. Risk is part of the learning journey, and while safety is a top priority, students must be ready for the challenges—and rewards—of learning in wild, remote environments.

If you're ready to learn by doing, grow as a leader, and become part of Canada's premier adventure education community, TRU Adventure Studies is where your journey begins.



For information about the application process, please visit our [website](#).

Adventure Guide diploma

After completing 30 credits in the certificate, students the ladder into the Adventure Guide diploma (in their second year). Here, students continue to build upon the technical skills and leadership within each of the activities achieved in the first year of study. Students will develop focus and refinement within their areas of interest, while having the option to add new technical skill areas as well.

The Adventure Guide diploma is a well-recognized credential for those who wish to go directly into employment in the adventure tourism industry. The private sector is a major supporter of this program through training, certifying and helping students build a network for future employment. Graduates work as outdoor skills instructors, mountain or river guides and in other wilderness-related leadership occupations.



Social media links

Follow us on social media and dive into the world of TRU adventure! From epic student journeys and inspiring alumni stories to jaw-dropping achievements and behind-the-scenes action.



Instagram

@truadventurestudies



Facebook

TRU Adventure Studies



LinkedIn

TRU Adventure Studies



ADV Blog

adventure.inside.tru.ca



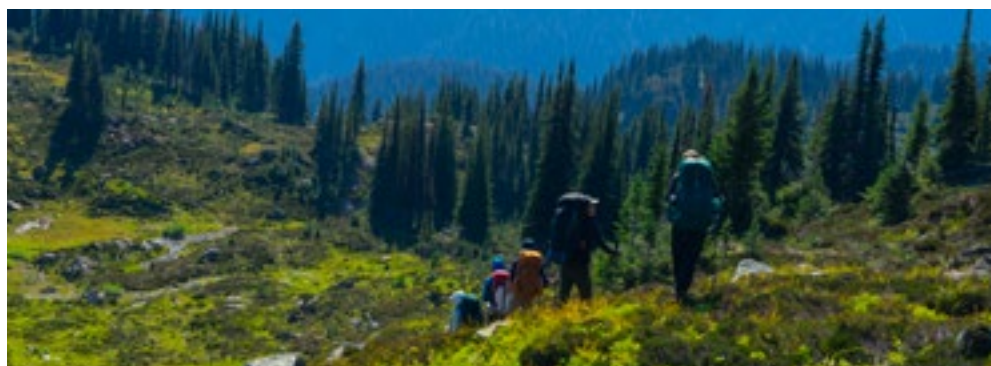
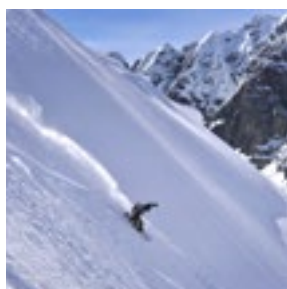
Website

tru.ca/adventure



WRAPPING UP A YEAR IN ADVENTURE







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