

## **UBC SEEDS – Learning Exchange Binning Project End of Year Summary**

### **I. Overview**

The Binning at UBC exploratory project 2005-06 was a joint effort between the Learning Exchange, the Sustainability Office's SEEDS program, Campus Security, the Museum of Anthropology, UBC Sociology 302a and Sociology 350 classes, and United We Can. United We Can is a social enterprise in the Downtown Eastside that focuses on recycling. With the help of students and staff, we aimed to develop an effective plan of action to integrate people who practice binning at UBC into successful recycling programs on campus and to explore recycling awareness and recycling habits of staff, faculty and students in the north quadrant of campus.

### **II. What is binning?**

Binning is the practice of collecting recyclable cans and bottles by scavenging, picking through garbage, or "dumpster diving." Some people rely on binning for their income. Currently, there is a growing population of people practicing binning on campus. People who practice binning may be viewed as an integral part of UBC's community sustainability efforts as they help reduce the amount of waste present on campus.

### **III. What are the goals of this project?**

This project considered ways of integrating binners into successful recycling efforts on campus with the north section of campus as its primary focus. This area includes offices (Mary Bollert Hall, Cecil Green House and Coach House), student residences (Green College), academic departments (Anthropology/Sociology) and academic/public facilities (Museum of Anthropology).

The project dealt with two important sustainability challenges at UBC: how to address conflicts, misunderstandings and security problems arising from the activities of binners on campus; and how to get students, staff and faculty to take part in recycling programs in the public areas on campus.

### **IV. Implementation**

During Academic Term 1 (September-December 2005), approximately thirty students from Sociology 302a and Sociology 350 classes worked in three groups of 8-10 students each.

- The first group focused primarily on developing relationships with binners on campus and in the surrounding area, in order to better understand the binning community i.e. its needs, concerns, and structure. Students visited United We Can in the Downtown Eastside and met with the Manager, Ken Lyotier. They also went to the "showers for the homeless" program at Kitsilano Community Center, showed the film *Traplins*, and informally talked to a few patrons. Two students went to the Go Green depot on Ontario Street and 7th and spoke with a manager. Finally, the group produced a map outlining the

"traplines" on campus, and the location of all the dumpsters and recycling containers in AnSo, the Museum of Anthropology, and Green College.

- The second group reached out to the student population. They showed the *Traplines* video to various Sociology classes. They also networked with student leaders at Green College Residence and at the Anthropology and Sociology Undergraduate Society, to seek their input and invite them to participate in the project. During a "Sustainability Networking Night" organized in the Student Union Building by the UBC Sustainability Ambassadors, they facilitated an informal discussion to generate ideas regarding effective ways to educate students about binning and recycling
- The third group worked mostly with UBC staff. They presented to and consulted with a number of units/offices in the North Campus Area, in order to understand staff needs, concerns, and potential contribution to improving recycling on campus. Students in this group reported that, "The one overwhelming truth of the whole assignment was that no one thought the same thing about binning. Concerns, worries, understandings, and beliefs varied widely." They did, however, identify general trends in thought as well as emerging issues such as safety, recyclables, cleanliness, accessibility, and they provided general suggestions.

All three groups wrote an interim report detailing what they did, what they learned, and where they saw their work going during Term 2.

During Term 2 we had significantly fewer students who could commit to continue working on the project (about 10 people). We spent considerable energy reflecting on what was learned and planning for September 2006. We started Term 2 with a half-day workshop where student representatives from each group shared their experience and thoughts from the previous months. As part of the workshop, we also did a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. One of the major challenges identified was that the campus binning community turned out to be much more complex and diverse than what we had originally thought. We lacked crucial information, contacts, and feasible ways of approaching binners in order to be able to gain further insight. As a result, we decided to shift our focus to educating students, faculty, and staff about recycling and binning. We created a ten-minute version of the film *Traplines*, and obtained permission from the author to show the film in various classes and venues at UBC. We also wrote a successful \$15,000 Sustainability Coordinator Disbursement Fund proposal to hire 1-2 students during the 2006-07 academic year to continue the work. One of the project's central goals will be to increase awareness among students, faculty and staff about recycling as a shared social and ecological responsibility. The role of the student coordinators will be to advance this goal through the establishment of an educational and social campaign that will include, but not be limited to, screening the film "Traplines" for student groups and associations, attending campus events, and creating a plan for distributing educational materials.

We would like to sincerely thank all of the students, faculty, staff, and community members who contributed to this project over the past year. Their important suggestions, support and insight will enable the students working on this project next year to build on existing knowledge, and develop an effective education campaign— towards a more sustainable and inclusive campus community.