Towards Just & Sustainable Cities

EUC Impact Report 2023-2024
We recognize that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes Region.

Photograph of Maloca Garden located on York University’s Keele campus. The garden serves as a ‘living lab’ at the Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change with food-based courses, collaborative research projects, and community plots for growing vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers.

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EUC Impact Report 2023-2024
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Message from the Dean’s Office

I AM DELIGHTED to share the 2023-2024 edition of EUC’s Impact Report.

This year, we are focusing attention on work within our community to advance a just and sustainable future for cities and urban regions, both in Canada and around the world.

As an institution, York has committed to being a strong force for change towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. We are proud that the Times Higher Education 2024 Impact Ranking has recently placed York 35th among all universities worldwide for its work on the SDGs, and at 13th in the world for action related to Goal #11, Sustainable Cities and Communities. This is an area of particular concern for EUC, and as this report shows, our faculty, students, staff, alumni and collaborators are working in diverse ways towards that goal.

The report highlights the breadth of activities being undertaken at EUC, right across the disciplinary spectrum — from an undergraduate student project assisting a local First Nation by studying water contamination from gold mines around Yellowknife, to a visual art exhibition that amplifies the impact of a New York City queer activist. The initiatives covered here also illustrate the global reach of EUC’s engagements and impact, from social housing in Colombian cities, to urban water quality and health in Zambia, to peri-urban flood vulnerability in the Philippines.

Throughout the report, you will find links to more detailed online versions of each item, and, in some cases, to short video clips featuring our faculty, students and staff. We hope you enjoy exploring the impact of EUC and we will always be delighted to hear from you if you would like to learn more.

Professor & Interim Dean Philip Kelly
Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change

EUC at a Glance

- 524 Undergraduate students
- 13,933 Alumni
- 500+ Community partners
- 230 Graduate students
- $15M in research funding, 2023
- 55 Faculty members
Environmental Science for Sustainable Cities

Through their research and outreach, environmental scientists at EUC are highlighting the (sometimes unexpected) impacts of human activity on shared ecosystems, and pointing the way towards more sustainable urbanization and more effective conservation practices.

Humber River Catchment study challenges common understandings of urban heat effects

THE HUMBER RIVER CATCHMENT covers 900 km² within Lake Ontario’s basin and is home to 850,000 people and immeasurable non-human life. Under the guidance of Professor Adeyemi Olusola, undergraduate researcher Jasper Wong studied Humber River Catchment land use changes between 1990 and 2022 to identify influences of urban development on this important watershed. Some of the findings were surprising.

Wong’s new land cover classification maps — which differentiated urban areas from forest, grassland, and water — quantified the increase in urbanization. More heat-absorbing concrete (buildings, city infrastructure) and human activity and decreased natural land cover generally contribute to a warming phenomenon called the urban heat island effect. This study’s findings, however, indicated cooler temperatures in 2022, suggesting there may be mitigating factors in the Humber River Catchment. Understanding these unexpected temperature dynamics and how they might inform sustainability practices in future urban development will be the next phase of this research.
Researchers discover unexpected cause of tern nest failure at Tommy Thompson Park

COMMON TERNS ARE MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS experiencing population decline on Lake Ontario. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority uses floating platforms as nesting sites in Tommy Thompson Park, declared a globally significant Important Bird Area, to help protect reproduction. In 2023, all tern nests in the park failed. While common terns are a long-living bird species that can afford to experience reproductive disruption in any one year, repeated predation pressures could result in site abandonment, reducing overall biodiversity in Tommy Thompson Park.

EUC Undergraduate Research Award recipient Jesse Hughes worked with Professor Gail Fraser to quantify predator type and abundance near the nesting rafts. Using camera trap photography, aerial surveys, and public observations documented in eBird, the study identified the likely cause of 2023’s nest failures: not the raccoons, mink, otters, opossums, herring gulls, night-herons, or eagles as expected, but a lone owl panicking the terns out of the nest each night.

Conservation lab educating the public about threats to endangered wild bees

In surveys conducted by HER CONSERVATION SCIENCE LAB, Professor Sheila Colla found over 85 percent of people believe pesticide use and loss of flowers are to blame for the native bee decline in Canada. While these are contributors, a top threat to native bees right now — and what Colla warns may lead to the extinction of multiple endangered bumblebee species — is introduced diseases from managed bees in our agricultural system.

Managed bees — bumblebees and honeybees kept as livestock for crop pollination — can have high disease levels. Honeybees, non-native to Canada, bring in novel parasites and viruses catastrophic to some native bee species. Well-intentioned efforts to “save the bees” have seen urban beekeeping increase exponentially in the past decade, although honeybees are not endangered and they threaten at-risk native bees. Loss of these native pollinators will be ecologically and economically devastating, underlining the importance of accurate education around conservation science.

Lake sediment research points to legacy ecotoxicity of Yellowknife gold mining

In the 1950s, the gold mining industry was booming in Yellowknife. Giant Mine, 5 km north of the town, produced its gold by roasting arsenopyrite ore, which released thousands of tonnes of highly toxic arsenic trioxide dust. Cleanup of the Giant Mine site is now among the largest remediation projects in Canada, yet it does not include all of the contaminated lakes within the mine’s 30-km radius. Quantifying the effects of mining-related arsenic contamination on these lakes will influence freshwater restoration, and assist the Yellowknives Dene First Nation in understanding current and future risks.

EUC Undergraduate Research Award recipient Altrisha Rodrigues worked with Professor Jennifer Korosi, and graduate students Amanda Little and Randelle Adano, to contribute PALEOLIMNOLOGICAL RESEARCH to this project. Specifically, Rodrigues studied the mandibles of phantom midges preserved in lake sediments to determine the presence or absence of fish, a key indicator of environmental change.

See Jesse Hughes discuss his work at Tommy Thompson Park.

A female green sweat bee on Euthamia occidentalis, also known as western goldenrod.

(Photo: JKehoe Photos)
Fostering Urban Social Justice

EUC researchers are furthering social justice in urban communities by advancing our understanding of fundamental urban dynamics and connecting with policy and advocacy communities.

Underlining accessibility issues with transportation and ride apps

Smartphone apps have become commonplace tools for travel and navigation but, due to a lack of mandatory requirements and regulations, many remain inaccessible to those with various disabilities. Professor Mahtot Gebreselassie’s research on the accessibility of transportation-related and ride-sharing apps highlights the importance of developing apps and other mobility tools to increase access to employment, education, health care and other services.

In the case of wheelchair users, accessibility issues are not about whether the apps themselves are usable but about whether the actual transportation service hailed through them is. Lawsuits by wheelchair users and disability rights organizations against companies like Uber and Lyft are mounting. Gebreselassie’s research, referenced in two recent articles by The Conversation, highlights the social need for systemic change to the companies’ practices, as well as the costs and financial benefit. Her work may push legislators to update disability-related regulations to include technology companies.

Introducing the new director of The City Institute, Luisa Sotomayor

In 2023, Professor Luisa Sotomayor was named as the new Director of The City Institute at York University (CITY), a leading hub of urban scholarship since 2006.

In her new role, Sotomayor intends to build upon the foundation laid by former leaders Linda Peake and Roger Keil. Sotomayor’s current research examines the effects and implications of Colombia’s national privatized social housing policy on peripheral urbanization processes in three cities (Bogotá, Barranquilla and Medellin) with a view to governance and municipal planning, as well as residents’ possibilities for agency and citizenship.
Professor Alison Bain invited dialogue between cultural, economic, and urban geography scholars, and colleagues from urban planning, anthropology, and performance studies. The result is **The Cultural Infrastructure of Cities**, a book edited by Bain with Concordia University and John Abbott College professor Julie A. Podmore. It explores producing, performing, consuming, and collecting culture in an urban context through stories of affordable studio spaces, public art festivals, theatres, museums, libraries, independent fashion, and hawkers in urban spaces around the world.

The book’s detailed case studies from 17 cities of the Global North and South recognize the vibrant, everyday culture that often goes unnoticed but significantly shapes our lives, and offer insight to policy-makers and those working in cultural institutions and creative industries for developing inclusive cultural infrastructures here in Toronto — where we have room for improvement in making culture, in all its forms, more accessible — and worldwide.

**“I want people to recognize the vibrant grassroots culture that often goes unnoticed but significantly shapes our lives.”**

Alison Bain, Professor

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**Improving government support of immigrant settlement agencies**

Professor Emerita Valerie Preston is the project director of Building Migrant Resilience in Cities, a research partnership and multi-sector collaboration that aims to enhance migrant settlement through research, policy review, and by sharing knowledge relevant to decision-makers. She has published extensively on issues related to migration and settlement in Canada, including a 2024 policy preview co-authored with Brian Ray titled **Toronto’s Housing Crisis: When Immigration and Housing Policies Don’t Align**, that quantified the severity of housing affordability challenges confronting immigrants and temporary migrants, and provided policy recommendations. Preston also co-authored an International Migration article, **Transforming Settlement and Integration Services During a Pandemic** highlighting challenges and opportunities in the state’s approach to supporting immigrant settlement agencies.

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**Romeo Joe Quintero** (PhD candidate, Geography) has been awarded a prestigious **Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship** by the Government of Canada. The Vanier scholarships support top students who demonstrate both leadership skills and a high standard of scholarly achievement in graduate studies.

Quintero’s doctoral project is titled **Building Liveable Futures in Camps: Everyday Placemaking Practices of Internally Displaced Women in the Southern Philippines**. The project is examining the experiences of those living in resettlement and transitory sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in areas of the southern Philippines affected by armed conflicts. Quintero is seeking to impact the understanding of governments, humanitarian agencies and other organizations in relation to IDPs’ livelihoods, constructions of home, and sense of belonging through collective action.

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**A playground located in a resettlement site, known as ‘Bamboo Houses’, for internally displaced persons in Zamboanga City, Philippines. (Photo: Romeo Joe Quintero)**
Advocating for Environmental and Food Justice in Cities

These stories, told through research, writing, and public art, have the potential to shape present and future cities by illuminating injustices, shared desires, and collective possibilities.

Case studies of post-industrial ecology offer alternate thinking about greenspaces

Professor Jennifer Foster explores often undervalued urban spaces — like old factories, dumps, rail lines — and talks to people who care deeply about these places. Her 2023 book, Post-industrial Urban Greenspace Ecology, Aesthetics and Justice, explores old industrial sites in Milwaukee, Paris, and Toronto that have been abandoned, or left to be without formal management. Foster explains, “These sites are not conventionally beautiful, they are typically evaluated as unsafe, and their ecologies are scorned as overgrown weeds. Yet, they offer some of the best opportunities for ecologically rich and socially inclusive greenspace, ... and function as alternative public spaces that provide relief from surveillance and other stressors, as well as opportunities for pleasure that diverge from the mainstream.”

THROUGH CASE STUDIES, Foster challenges site redevelopment for economic growth, and advocated for ecological resilience and justice instead. The book provides insights and evidence to shape urban planning, landscape architecture, urban geography, and restoration ecology thinking.

Researcher seeks to improve water safety in informal settlements

Ensuring access to safe drinking water is crucial for public health, yet it remains a global crisis. The United Nations reports 26% of the world’s population lacks safe drinking water and 46% lacks basic sanitation, leading to water-related diseases that persist as major health threats. This challenge is especially acute in informal settlements in the Global South, where inadequate water and sanitation exacerbate physical and social inequities, from stunted growth to heightened rates of sexual violence against girls and women.

Environmental Studies doctoral candidate Hillary Birch is examining how global health initiatives intersect with urbanization processes in Lusaka, Zambia, addressing the complexities of improving water quality during rapid urban growth and climate change. HER RESEARCH SEeks TO GUIDE more effective global health strategies for sustainable urban development, emphasizing disease prevention and equitable access to safe drinking water. The International Development Research Centre recognized the importance of her work with a 2023 International Doctoral Research Award.
Understanding political ecology of flood disasters to benefit coastal city residents

Coastal cities are experiencing tremendous growth; the speed of coastal urbanization, which is expected to continue, is transforming socio-economic and environmental landscapes, and increasing residents’ exposure to climate change impacts.

Awarded a 2023 International Doctoral Research Award from The International Development Research Centre, Geography PhD candidate Ria Jhoanna Ducusin is investigating the intersection of ecological conditions, socio-political relations, and gender and class dynamics in coastal flooding, specifically aiming to strengthen our understanding of the causes, differing experiences, and mitigation of flood disasters in rapidly urbanizing coastal cities in the Philippines, with a case study in Bacoor City, Cavite. DUCUSIN’S RESEARCH motivation stems from her experiences growing up in the Philippines, with its high vulnerability to natural disasters — Typhoons Milenyo and Glenda flooded her family’s home, and led to weeks without electricity, water, or communication services.

Arts installations and gardens in public space are tools for creative resistance

MAKING WITH PLACE is a participatory arts and research initiative begun in 2020, exploring community, culture, and public space through the perspective of young QT/BIPOC artist-researchers. Mentored by adult artists, they created original art, writing, and place-based activations, amid the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on public and personal spaces, heightened activism against anti-Black racism, and an uprising in mutual aid.

The project — co-designed by EUC graduate students Phyllis Novak and Charlotte Lombardo, with support from respective supervisors Lisa Myers and Sarah Flicker — challenges systemic oppression through creative resistance, with recurrent themes of ethical engagement with self and community and land, and collective care over individualism.

Novak is also director of EUC’s Maloca Community Garden, a space to aid individuals who lack access to land, want to grow gardening skills, strive to raise awareness of food security, or simply want to develop community connections.

Watch Director of EUC’s Maloca Community Garden Phyllis Novak discuss the space.
Feminist urban scholars collaborating on international research, public education, and policy

Called GenUrb for short, Urbanization, Gender, and the Global South: A Transformative Knowledge Network, began in 2017 and is now wrapping up its work. The project has drawn together a group of feminist urban scholars and activists from ten countries to focus on gendered experiences of 21st century urbanization.

This global partnership has conducted research and engaged in public education and policy enrichment in eight cities — Cairo, Cochabamba, Delhi, Georgetown (Guyana), Ibadan, Mumbai, Ramallah, and Shanghai — chosen for their differing regional locations, sizes and experiences of urbanization and migration, aiming to advance understanding of the relationship between poverty and inequality and how women’s right to the city is changing. A new paper titled Everyday Urbanisms in the Pandemic City: A Feminist Comparative Study of the Gendered Experiences of Covid-19 in Southern Cities is a significant example of the partnership’s collaboration, identifying deepened gendered and racial exclusions, and increased care work, violence, and strained mental health.

GenUrb Principal Investigator Linda Peake recognized with the President’s Research Excellence Award 2023
Roger Keil appointed CIFAR Fellow in its Humanity’s Urban Future program

EUC Distinguished Research Professor Roger Keil has been appointed as a Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research’s Humanity’s Urban Future program. A Canadian-based global research organization, CIFAR convenes extraordinary minds to address the most important questions facing science and humanity. This year, the Humanity’s Urban Future program will explore the question: What is a good city of the future?

Keil is an urban and environmental studies scholar trained in political science whose research on politics and governance includes: global suburbanization, the interrelationship of global and peripheral urbanization and the spread of infectious diseases, and urbanization of nature in the face of climate change. All of which will inform the work that lies ahead as he contributes to thinking about future urban life on this planet. He and colleagues in the CIFAR program are committed to inspiring collective deliberation on how to make a better urban future.

Project examines involvement of public education in precarity of displaced migrants

State-funded public education, long valued as a crucial tool for reducing inequality, promoting economic mobility, and advocating social justice, can have an ongoing transformative effect on the evolution of the public realm. However, researchers are increasingly acknowledging the inability of publicly funded education systems to sufficiently address the needs of poor and marginalized groups. Within the context of this systemic shortcoming, displaced migrants, who are disconnected politically, socially, and geographically from power, face conditions of extreme precarity.

In the context of this pressing global challenge, urban, social and political geographer Professor Ranu Basu, explores geopolitical questions of forced displacement and the corresponding transformational dynamics of educational spaces as part of a broader project comparing Toronto, Havana, and Kolkata. This Project is part of a multi-year, international SSHRC Insight Grant titled, Subalterity, public education, and welfare cities: Comparing the experience of displaced migrants in three cities: Havana, Toronto, Kolkata.

Understanding lessons from Jakarta for urban resilience, informality, infrastructure, and environmental issues

Professor Abidin Kusno has authored a new book titled JAKARTA: THE CITY OF A THOUSAND DIMENSIONS. He chose to write about Jakarta for both personal and intellectual reasons: Jakarta is where Kusno once worked and where his extended family and friends in Indonesia live. “It allows me to work with the residents of the city, seeing myself relationally as both an insider and outsider.” A megacity of 30 million under threat from rising sea levels and temperatures, Jakarta and its resilient residents improvise and thrive. The book draws some of the dimensions that have given shape to contemporary Jakarta, including the city’s expanded flexibility in accommodating capital and labour, and the consistent lack of planning that can be understood as a result of both politics and the poetics of governing in the region. Jakarta helps to foreground the lessons to be learned from one of Asia’s most dynamic cities.
Planning for Sustainable Cities

Varied EUC contributions — biocapacity assessments, the curation of sustainable energy transition case studies, intersectional municipal policy review, and post-graduation work and volunteerism — demonstrate an ethic of care and a commitment to policy and planning for sustainable urban regions.

THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT INITIATIVE is a research, training, and analytics hub within EUC that produces the National Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts — the core data required for all Ecological Footprint analysis worldwide. The accounts measure the ecological resource use and resource capacity of nations over time.

Similar analyses can be done of smaller regions, including cities, urban communities, and even our university campuses. The initiative was commissioned to assess York’s greenhouse gas emissions and ecological footprint from May 2015 to April 2020, a pre-pandemic baseline, and determined, among other findings, that York would require about 90 times the biocapacity of its three campuses to offset its emissions and its consumption of forest products and food and cropped materials. The assessment serves as a model for other urban communities to follow, and provides important data for planning to meet York’s target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2040.

The Footprint Initiative is also the basis for a major new partnership in the form of The International Ecological Footprint Learning Lab, aimed at training a new generation of sustainability analysts with partners in British Columbia, California and Iceland.
EUC recognizes two of York’s 2023 Top 30 Alumni Under 30

Two EUC graduates were celebrated as part of YORK’S 2023 TOP 30 ALUMNI UNDER 30: Ying Gu and Lela Pacitti-Sander. Both exceptional alumni are creating positive change in their respective fields. Gu is an urban sustainability professional in the construction and real estate sector focusing on climate change adaptation and mitigation. She combines standard engineering and architectural practices with sustainability principles to ensure the fulfillment of commitments to climate resilience, energy performance, ecological impact minimization, promoting native and adaptive plant species, and building occupant wellness and community connectivity. Pacitti-Sander is a community planner and youth worker in the housing and community services sector. As a policy development officer with the City of Toronto, she is devoted to modernizing access to housing. Pacitti-Sander is also a youth worker at Youth Rising Above, a registered charity focused on providing young people opportunities to strengthen personal and community well-being.

Research aims to improve municipal policies for low-income renters and homeowners

As global climate continues to change, low-income homeowners and renters face disproportionate difficulties, ranging from extreme temperature exposure in post-war tower apartments that lack central cooling systems and adequate insulation, to frequent experiences of basement flooding in poorly maintained rental basement units, to the health risks of vector-borne diseases for unhoused individuals. Additionally, when poverty intersects with various aspects of identity, such as age, gender, immigration status, race, and disability, vulnerabilities can be compounded. There is a lack of critical analysis of municipal housing policies through the lens of climate change adaptation/mitigation, climate justice, and intersectional vulnerabilities; Niloofar Mohtat intends to ADDRESS THIS DEFICIT. As a postdoctoral fellow helping to shape EUC’s Climate and Equity Lab, Mohtat is researching how the effects of climate change may exacerbate inequalities faced by Canada’s most disadvantaged populations. Her findings should help cities develop policies that are inclusive, context-specific, and responsive.

Underscoring the necessity of energy justice in policy and planning

Discussing decarbonization within the framework of energy sustainability and justice, “SUSTAINABLE ENERGY TRANSITIONS IN CANADA”—co-edited by EUC professor Mark Winfield and researchers Stephen Hill and James Gaede—brings together experts from across the country to share their perspectives on leading theories and practices. The book investigates topics such as energy justice and poverty, the decolonization of energy, community energy planning, the role of energy systems modelling, and links between energy and climate change policy.

They offer case studies that cover the North, the Atlantic region, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia along with crucial sectors like transportation and space heating, that in varied ways emphasize the importance of ecological, social, and cultural integrity in sustainability practices, and suggest principles and considerations relevant to urban communities. This collection can influence the work of scholars and practitioners in the areas of climate change, energy systems transitions, sustainability, energy policy, and environmental policy.
Mobilizing the Arts for Just and Sustainable Cities

EUC community members have used storytelling, poetry, sculpture, film, and song to look backward and forward, to instruct, to challenge, to think and to dream together. The prominence of the arts in action for urban and environmental justice is a unique feature of EUC’s research and teaching programs.

Remembering and honouring the life, work, and urban influence of poet and activist Colin Robinson

EUC professor and artist Andil Gosine is exhibiting his curatorial project “THE PLURAL OF HE” at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Art in New York, from March to July 2024. Through artistic works, including pieces by MES alumna Amber Williams-King and EUC PhD student Natalie Wood, The Plural of He explores the life and work of Colin Robinson, the Trinidadian American poet, critic, and unsung hero of social and sexual liberation movements in New York City, the Caribbean, and the world. Living as an undocumented migrant in New York for twenty-five years, Robinson was a powerful force in the city’s queer, HIV/AIDS, and feminist movements. The commissioned works draw on records of Robinson’s personal history, activist ephemera, carnival costumes and calypso music, letters, an unfinished novel, newspaper columns and poetry. In Robinson’s work, the artists found continuity between their lives and his, echoing and extending his pursuit of connection, urban community, and justice.

Watch EUC PhD student Natalie Wood discuss her research.
Nurturing community health and food justice through music making

In the Jane-Finch neighbourhood, lack of access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious foods has long been identified as a systemic justice issue. The Oral History, Food Justice and Music Making research project studies the ongoing work of Toronto Black Farmers and Food Growers Collective in building alternatives to food injustices, and records and shares stories about farming and eating in the Black, LatinX, and Caribbean communities around Jane and Finch. They make music from these stories of strength and creativity and share them across generations to support community health and food justice. Key findings are being incorporated into a website that will hold musical, narrative, and other creative learning resources intended to encourage understanding, dialogue, and action on food justice. The researchers consist of graduate students from the Jane and Finch community facilitated by EUC Professor Emerita Honor Ford-Smith and EUC Community Arts graduate Marvin Veloso.

Eco-justice through multispecies art practice on the Leslie Spit cormorant colony

Environmental Studies PhD student and artist Cole Swanson has been awarded a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship for his research on the use of material-based art to explore the dynamic ecology of a bird colony with a stigmatized reputation, the double-crested cormorants. Working against dangerous imaginaries on cormorants fuelled by religious, settler-colonial, and extractivist histories and politics, Swanson, whose artistic practice mines the complex intersections at play between humans and non-human animals, will examine life in the colony to illuminate the entanglements between avian, human, and more-than-human worlds. Swanson is working with EUC professor and environmental ecologist Gail Fraser and the project will culminate in a multisensory art exhibition composed of photo, video, and sound recorded from the colony, which will be shared with a diverse public for analysis useful in both scientific and social contexts.

Film provides the history lesson on treaties we didn’t get in school

By These Presents: “Purchasing” Toronto is an absurdist examination of the Toronto “Purchase”, a controversial treaty between the British and Mississaugas covering much of modern-day Toronto. The all-Indigenous cast of By These Presents use dance, large-scale puppetry, and humour to chronicle the opening chapter of the city’s colonial history in three acts. With a script drawing from treaty council minutes, Mississauga petitions to the Crown, correspondence between colonial officials, and interviews with Indigenous knowledge keepers, the film — by multidisciplinary artist Ange Loft and EUC professor Martha Stiegman as part of Jumblies Theatre & Arts’ Talking Treaties project — reveals the calculus the British employed to diminish the Mississaugas, divide them from their Haudenosaunee allies, and acquire their lands at rock-bottom prices. By These Presents is the history lesson you wish you had got in school. It was screened at Congress 2023 and is available for rental.
EUC Highlights 2023-2024

Every year, EUC faculty, students, and visiting scholars hold numerous research events, seminars, lectures, conferences and other activities. This is a small selection of highlights from 2023 to 2024.

EUC Climate Seminar welcomes scholars from across the globe

The climate crisis — especially when broadly conceived — is undoubtedly the most urgent issue of our times. Universities play a critical role in addressing the crisis as both sites of knowledge production and spaces where multiple constituencies can meet to imagine and make change together. The EUC Climate Seminar Series, curated by Carlota McAllister, hopes to do its part in this process by bringing scholars and activists working on this critical problem to York on a regular basis. This year, the Seminar Series welcomed Kai Bosworth, an assistant professor of international studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, and renowned Indian journalist and author P. Sainath.

Most notably, EUC in partnership with UBC’s Centre for Climate Justice, and the Environmental Studies Association of Canada hosted a keynote panel during Congress 2023. THE KEYNOTE PANEL titled Indigenous Knowing and Climate Futures featured Candis Callison and Deborah McGregor, two distinguished Indigenous researchers and communicators. Award-winning author and activist Naomi Klein was also part of the panel.

The International Ecological Footprint Learning Lab

A team of EUC researchers were awarded a $2.5M SSHRC Partnership Grant for their project titled, The International Ecological Footprint Learning Lab: Training, (research and novel applications. The team is led by Peter Victor as principal investigator, with Eric Miller, Katie Kish, Tarmo Remmel, Brynhildur Davíðsdóttir (University of Iceland) and David Lin (Global Footprint Network) as co-directors. Martin Bunch, Peter Mulvihill, Peter Timmerman, Sheila Colla, Gregory Thiemann, Jennifer Korosi, Lina Brand-Correa, and Adeyemi Olusola are co-applicants/collaborators. The partnership draws on the strengths of York University, University of Iceland, British Columbia Institute of Technology, and the Global Footprint Network, to create novel research applications and teaching expertise on ecological economics and systems modelling. The project will train a generation of interdisciplinary students and postdoctoral fellows over 7 years to effectively engage with issues at the intersection of sustainability and justice challenges.
Honouring Professor Emeritus John Warkentin

Professor Emeritus John Warkentin is an esteemed EUC colleague and long-time champion of Geography at York University. Warkentin has been a dedicated mentor to undergraduate and graduate students and a supporter of the York University Geography Alumni Network (YUGAN) since 1963. The John Warkentin Room in the Health, Nursing & Environmental Studies (HNES) Building honours his 60 years of contributions to our academic community.

John Warkentin Room Dedication
Health, Nursing & Environmental Studies (HNES) Building
Room 138

EUC Co-op Program launching in Fall 2024

To enrich the academic experience and cultivate meaningful real-world connections, EUC is pleased to announce the launch of its Co-op Program.

Arriving students will have the opportunity to declare their intention to participate in the Co-op program right from the start of their academic journey. To equip students with the skills and knowledge for a successful co-op transition, students will take Professional Development for Co-op Students, an online asynchronous course (ENVS/COOP 2001) launching in the Fall 2024 term. Co-op placements will allow students to gain invaluable experience while being compensated for their contribution. EUC is dedicated to providing students with a holistic educational experience that seamlessly integrates theory with practical real-world experience.

GIS Day

In observation of GIS Day, EUC celebrated the occasion by highlighting the impact of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and geomatics in the world. Speakers from EUC were Tarmo Remmel, Justin Podur and Adeyemi Olusola, alongside other York faculty and students. The event provided valuable insights into the role of GIS in various fields, including land mapping, electric cargo cycles, and marine navigation.
Environmentalist Dr. Nnimmo Bassey received an Honorary Doctor of Laws at EUC’s convocation ceremony in 2023. During his address to graduands, he spoke of growing up during the Nigerian-Biafran war, a time he described as “disruptive and traumatic,” leading him to be exposed to human rights abuses, hunger, disease and more. Those experiences, as well as living under the oppression of a series of military authoritarian dictatorships, led Bassey to develop a desire to change the world around him. Today, Bassey is the director of the ecological think tank Health of Mother Earth Foundation, which is based in Nigeria. He is also a member of the steering committee of Oilwatch International, a network resisting the expansion of fossil fuels extraction in the Global South.

Nnimmo Bassey calls for graduands to “restore hope in our time”

“This is a time to stand together to demand justice in all circumstances, to call for an end to genocide, to build solidarity, and not walls, and to restore hope in our time.”

Nnimmo Bassey, Honorary Doctorate

UNESCO Schools Network National Conference

EUC supported the UNESCO Schools Network National Conference in April 2024. This multi-day event showcased inspiring dedication from students Grades 7-12, towards sustainability and tackling climate change. From Alberta to Yukon, students across Canada attended workshops that equipped them with the knowledge and skills needed to make change.

OAGEE Conference 2023

In October 2023, EUC hosted the Ontario Association of Geographic and Environmental Educators (OAGEE). OAGEE is a leading subject association for teachers in the province of Ontario with a mandate to support teachers in their implementation of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s curriculum. Several EUC colleagues formed a panel to discuss Sustainable and Equitable Urbanism: Joseph Mensah, Ranu Basu, Abidin Kusno, and Laura Taylor.
Alumni Awards recipient: Flavien P. Joubert

Each year, the YORK UNIVERSITY ALUMNI AWARDS recognize outstanding alum who have achieved the extraordinary and are working to right the future by creating positive change in their fields. The Awards celebrate the broad York alum community of innovators, activists and researchers and its long-standing commitment to the public good.

This year, Flavien P. Joubert (MES '03) was presented with the Tentanda Via Award. This award goes to an alum who has demonstrated innovative, unconventional, and daring leadership and success, reflecting the University’s motto “The way must be tried.” Joubert currently serves as the minister for agriculture, climate change and environment of the Republic of Seychelles.

International Political Economy and Ecology (IPEE) Summer School

Jointly organized by the graduate programs in Geography, Environmental Studies and Political Science, the summer school has hosted distinguished guest instructors since its inception in 1991. This year’s speaker was Juanita Sundberg from the University of British Columbia. Sundberg was hosted by Professor Carlota McAllister and the Graduate Program in Geography. The course was titled Politics, Ethics, More-Than-Human Methodologies and culminated in a public talk by Sundberg and her collaborator Columba González-Duarte on Multispecies Flourishing Across Borders.

Black Community Space

The Black Mentorship Program and a dedicated Black Community Space launched at EUC. The Black Mentorship Program aims to promote diversity and foster a more inclusive culture for Black EUC students. The Black Community Space was developed through the guidance of the EUC Black Caucus, the Equity Space Dialogue and ongoing consultations with the EUC Black community. This space provides a safe(r) space for Black students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

On Fire: PhD Research Day

In November 2023, the PhD Environmental Studies Student Association (PhESSA) held a Research Day that engaged the exciting and provocative work of Environmental Studies PhD students. The event, titled On Fire, aimed to celebrate the work of Environmental Studies PhD students working for social and environmental justice, while bringing them together with faculty members and larger communities of scholarship, activism and practice. A special presentation on UnMapping An Afronautic Journey was made by PhD graduate and award-winning artist Camille Turner with a panel of respondents curated by PhD student Natalie Wood.
Experience urban ecosystems through a new lens at HNES

The Bentway, a not-for-profit organization and public space nestled beneath Toronto’s Gardiner Expressway, donated an art installation called the Multispecies Lounge to EUC. The art piece is currently installed near EUC’s Native Plant Garden in front of the Health, Nursing & Environmental Studies (HNES) Building on York’s Keele Campus. It will serve as a site of experiential education and reflection related to urban ecology, human-animal relations and public art.

**THE INSTALLATION** consists of specially designed furniture composed of locally upcycled materials for birds, insects and humans alike to enjoy. Created by Joyce Hwang and Nerea Feliz, known collectively as Double Happiness, the Multispecies Lounge invites interspecies encounters with urban wildlife.

York to address climate impact on vulnerable communities

Last Spring, a groundbreaking social innovation initiative that aims to drive positive change at the intersection of climate change, housing and poverty reduction was launched at the Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change (EUC), thanks to funding from Gore Mutual Foundation and a partnership with Social Innovation Canada (SI Canada). **THE $1-MILLION FUND** has supported the development of the Climate and Equity Lab at York to better understand the impacts of climate change on vulnerable Canadians in urban environments. As part of the project, EUC appointed Niloofar Mohtat, a full-time postdoctoral fellow, who has worked to identify gaps through existing research and assist in developing new research to explore how the effects of climate change may exacerbate inequalities faced by Canada’s most disadvantaged populations.

**TD Friends of the Environment**

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation (TD FEF) has donated to the Maloca Community Garden, expanding on the success of the CommunALL Garden plot which piloted in 2023. The project will establish two 2000 sq ft communal gardening fields, providing food, flowers, and medicinal plants for students and the community. It emphasizes Indigenous 2SQTBIPOC+ leadership to integrate Anishinaabeg Two-spirit knowledge and earthwork practices. Weekly activities led by Indigenous leaders will educate participants and foster community engagement.
In June 2024, EUC welcomed a group of research collaborators from Ghana. The group is working with Professor Joseph Mensah on a project funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), titled Examining the Socio-Economic and Health Vulnerabilities of Female ‘Bushmeat’ Traders in Ghana During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic. The visitors included: Professor Charlotte N. Wrigley-Asante (Geography, University of Ghana); Dr. Fidelia Ohemeng (Sociology, University of Ghana); Dr. Kofi Amponsah-Mensah (Center for Biodiversity Conservation Research, University of Ghana); and, Dr. Emmanuel A. Odame, Ghana Ministry of Health. The project is part of IDRC’s Women RISE initiative — a global research project on women’s health and economic empowerment for a COVID-19 recovery. The project in Ghana aims to improve understanding of an insufficiently known livelihood activity for women; mobilize resources to enhance the well-being of women participating in the bushmeat trade, and to promote gender and health equity in Ghana more generally.
Dean’s Awards

The EUC Dean’s Awards were presented to faculty and staff members nominated by their peers. These individuals serve as role models, embracing EUC’s call to action in shaping a more just and sustainable world.

The Dean’s Teaching Award was presented to Lina Brand Correa in recognition of her excellence in challenging, motivating, and inspiring students, and especially her teaching and mentorship around the degrowth concept in the MES program.

The Dean’s Research Award was presented to Abidin Kusno in recognition of his significant contributions to scholarship and research leadership, and especially his acclaimed new book Jakarta: The City of A Thousand Dimensions.

The Dean’s Staff Award was presented to Andrea Abello in recognition of her professionalism, creativity and innovation as EUC’s Digital & Multimedia Specialist.

The Dean’s Service Award was presented to Steven Tufts in recognition of his outstanding service contributions to the Faculty, both as the Geography graduate program director and as one of the leads in the cyclical program review process.

EUC faculty members at Convocation in June 2024, celebrating our graduating students and the appointment of Roger Keil as a Distinguished Research Professor.
Amazing things happen when diverse communities work together to tackle world issues. When York University students apply their knowledge, they have the power to make things right. Join us in creating positive change.  yorku.ca/rightthefuture