



RESEARCH. CONNECT. MOBILIZE.

# THE SUSTAINABILITY AND EDUCATION POLICY NETWORK PROGRESS REPORT



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada





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# ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY AND EDUCATION POLICY NETWORK

Established in 2012, the Sustainability and Education Policy Network (SEPN) is a collaborative partnership between academic research institutions and national/international organizations. SEPN's partners include leading Canadian environmental policy organizations, North American educational organizations focused on sustainability in early childhood to grade 12 education (EC-12) and post-secondary education (PSE), and Canadian and international researchers in sustainability policy and practice in education. The SEPN research team is an active, vibrant, growing group of graduate students, researchers, and leading environmental policy and sustainability education organizations. We are pleased to be reporting on the progress we have made in our first two years.

SEPN is funded by a \$2 million Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant with \$1 million in additional cash and in-kind matching funding.

## Research

SEPN's research program addresses the current lack of coordinated analysis and development of sustainability in education policy and practice in Canada. SEPN's goal is to examine and enable the evolution of education policy and practice in EC-12 and PSE contexts in relation to Canadian sustainability issues. SEPN is accomplishing this goal by examining existing and new policies, practices, and innovations in sustainability education-related curriculum, research, facilities operations, governance, and community outreach.

**SEPN's core focus is the policy-practice gap.** The research team is working to determine which policies, practices, and innovations are most promising for enabling educational change for a more sustainable future. The Network will develop research-based models of exemplary education policy and practice regarding sustainability and engage with stakeholders on the uptake of the research into policy- and decision-making.

SEPN's research is organized into two subthemes, **EC-12 (Subtheme A)** and **PSE (Subtheme B)** and three iterative and interrelated themes:



### THEME 1: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- National census & content analysis of policies to understand how current Canadian educational policy is engaging with sustainability issues



### THEME 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- National survey & site analyses to examine the relationships between educational policy and practice regarding sustainability



### THEME 3: KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

- Develop models of exemplary educational policy and practice to further sustainability
- Engage educational institutions and communities to impact policy and practice

## Outcomes and Impact

SEPN's intended outcomes are to:

- Increase knowledge of Canadian environmental issues to develop sustainable communities
- Create innovative scholarly knowledge through policy analysis
- Mobilize new models and best practices for educators, decision-makers, and educational institutions
- Provide training and mentoring for students and staff
- Foster ongoing Network cooperation and organizational learning
- Create an ongoing interdisciplinary & multi-sector national network

## RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

### PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA)  
David Suzuki Foundation (DSF)  
Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF)  
Sierra Youth Coalition (SYC)

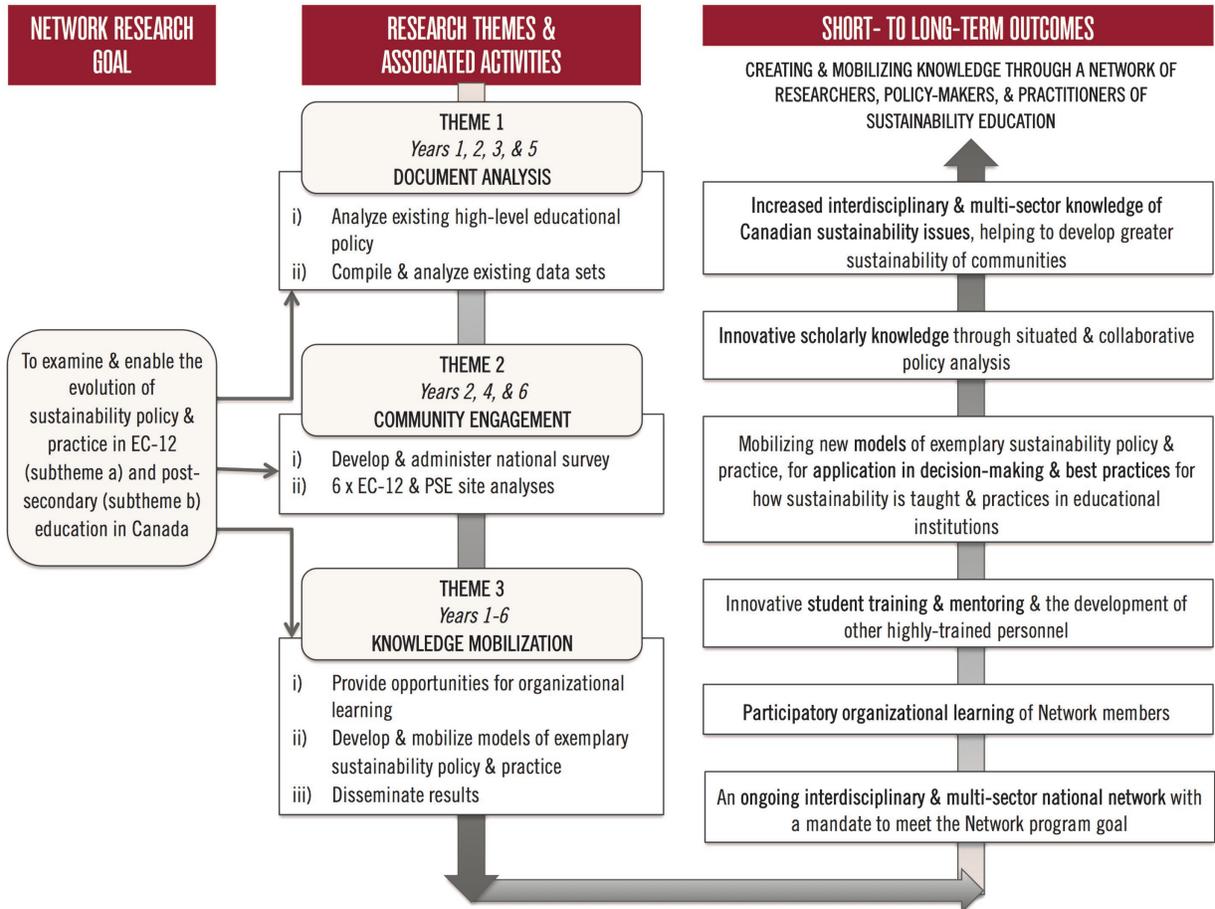
### CONTRIBUTOR ORGANIZATIONS

Assembly of First Nations (AFN)  
Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)  
Global Youth Education Network (GYEN)  
Métis National Council (MNC)  
Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG)

### ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Dalhousie University (DAL)  
King's University College (KUC)  
University of British Columbia (UBC)  
University of Saskatchewan (US)  
University of Waikato (UW)  
Wageningen University (WU)

# GOALS, ACTIVITIES, AND OUTCOMES



# WHY SEPN?

SEPN brings together academics and national and international organizations to develop innovative, new research-based policy and practice models for addressing Canadian sustainability issues in education. SEPN exists because:

## Education Must Play a Role in Creating a Sustainable Future

- Climate change, new environmental technologies, and energy and water sustainability are cultural and political challenges, not just technical issues
- Responses to human-environment challenges require integrated solutions that depend on an informed and motivated citizenry
- Learning programs developed to inform and motivate citizens must include an interdisciplinary understanding of complex socio-ecological environments

SEPN is examining existing and new policies, practices, and innovations in relation to curriculum, research, facilities operations, governance, and community outreach and determining which are most promising for enabling educational change for a more sustainable future. The project will result in the development of new models to improve how environmental sustainability is taught and practiced in educational institutions within Canada and around the world.

## Existing Research is Scarce, Uncoordinated, and Limited in Scope

- Canada's highly decentralized education system discourages educational research comparing different provinces and communities in both EC-12 and PSE
- Little coordinated research exists examining the range of education policies and practices related to sustainability being developed, implemented, and experienced in EC-12 and PSE contexts
- Research in the area is typically done as small-scale, non-comparable case studies
- To date, minimal research of national scope has been done examining sustainability in education policy and practice

As a large-scale, national project, SEPN addresses the lack of coordinated analysis and development of education policy and practice in sustainability in Canada by collecting comparable data across jurisdictions while still capturing site-specific differences.

## Traditional Policy Analysis Approaches Oversimplify Education Policy and Practice

- Traditional policy analysis traces policy from development to implementation, viewing sustainability as a pre-determined endpoint
- Existing research has tended to take a policy science approach focused on the practices needed to achieve policy goals, emphasizing increased efficiencies in facilities management or on increasing curricular or research sustainability content

SEPN's core focus is the policy-practice gap. SEPN uses practice to critically examine policy, and develop research-based situated models for further developing both education policy and practice regarding sustainability. Rather than only looking at whether policy achieves practice, this project asks how education sustainability policy might also develop, including through better responding to practice.

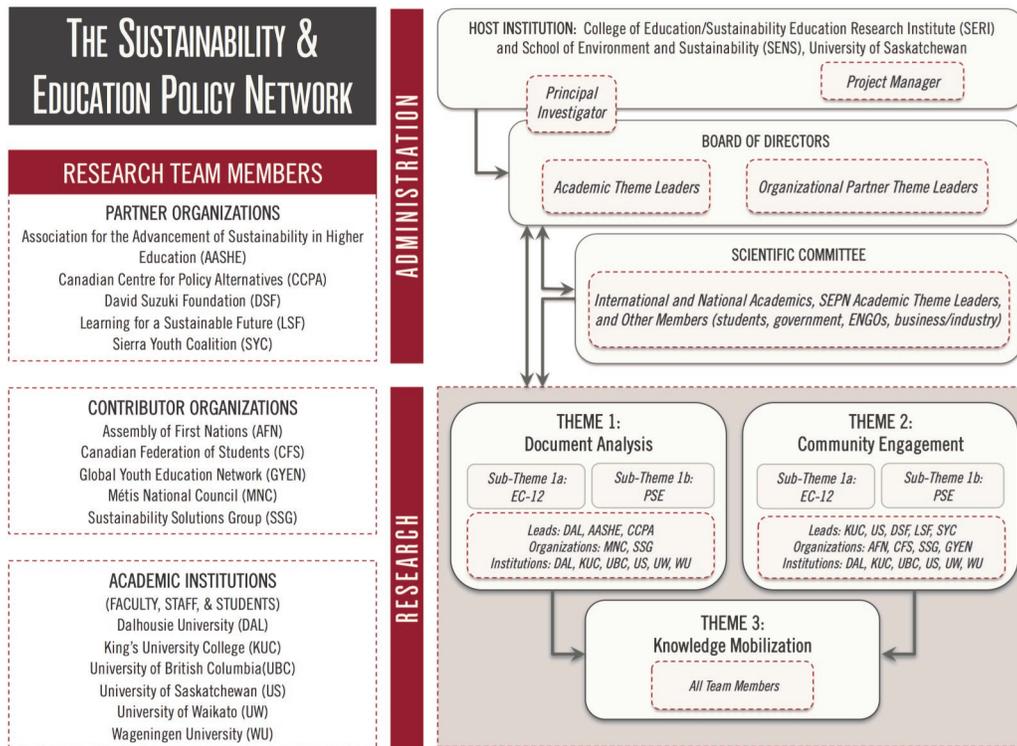
## Sustainability Policy Development Must Be Grounded in Active Dialogue

- Examining communities' on-the-ground experiences of education policy related to sustainability provides the best chance for developing effective policy and practice
- Responding to human sustainability challenges requires policies and structures that support multi-sector partnerships (e.g., government, business, and NGOs) that also respond to local contexts and needs

SEPN integrates key multi-sector institutions and organizations that will catalyze environment-related policy and practice throughout Canada's EC-12 and PSE systems. The SEPN partnership model maximizes opportunities for new knowledge and understanding to be translated into practical tools that support decision-making. SEPN's research also explores communities' on-the-ground experiences of sustainability policies in education, and examines how these experiences can or should play a role in the assessment of policy impacts and in (re)shaping policy narratives.

# NETWORK STRUCTURE

SEPN's research team is currently made up of representatives from 5 Partner Organizations, 5 Contributor Organizations, and 6 academic institutions. The grant is housed by the Sustainability Education Research Institute, which is located at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Education. The Principal Investigator and Project Director is Dr. Marcia McKenzie. Individuals and organizations who are interested in becoming Network members are encouraged to visit SEPN's website or contact Project Manager, Nicola Chopin, for more information.



## Contacts and Network Management Office



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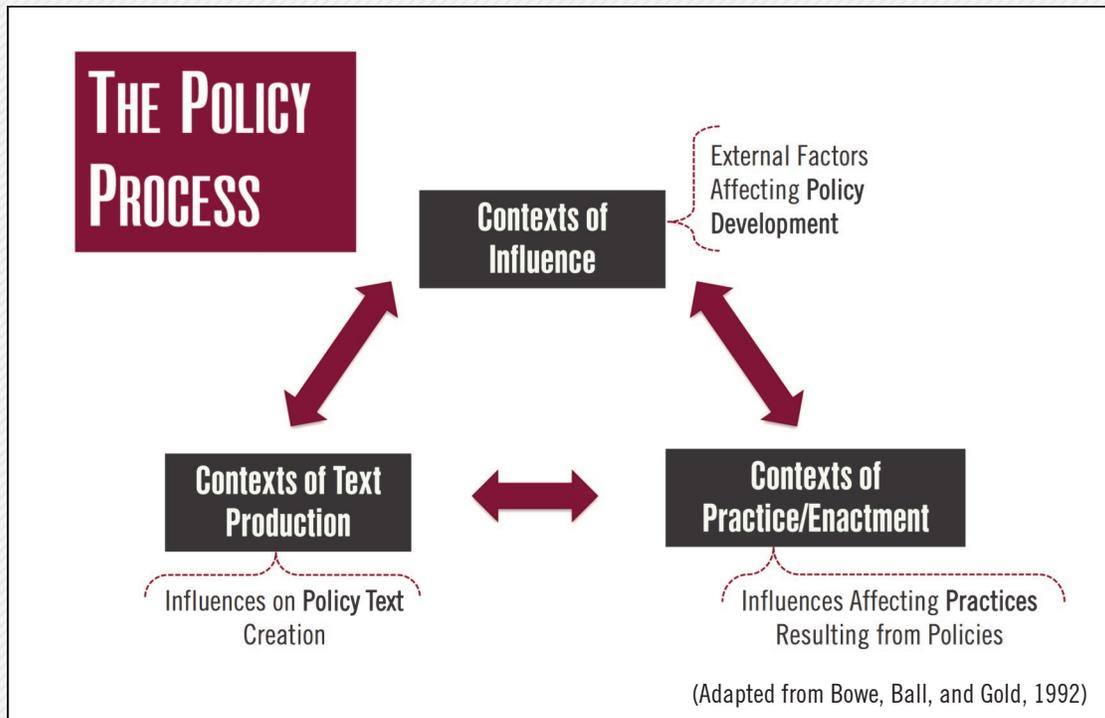


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# CONCEPTUALIZING POLICY



**Policy is not simply legislation developed by local, provincial, or national governments for insertion into schools. The SEPN project conceptualizes the policy process as a complex interplay between the written policy text and various influences and contexts.**

Ball and colleagues (2012) describe policy as a “process of ‘becoming,’ changing from the outside in and the inside out” (p. 4). The process of policy enactment involves translating policy texts into action as well as recontextualizing oftentimes abstract policy concepts into situated sustainability practices (Ball et al., 2012). Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992), describe the policy process as involving bidirectional flows between:

**Contexts of Policy Text Production:** Factors influencing the creation of the policy text itself including other policies and the worldviews, personalities, and backgrounds of various policy actors who are often operating in the midst of competing priorities

**Contexts of Influence:** External factors affecting the creation of a policy such as other policies (local, national, international), policy actors, resources, networks, community, and place-specific factors

**Contexts of Practice:** Influences affecting the practices that result from policies including policy actors, power dynamics, community, and place-specific factors

# THEME 1: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

SEPN's research is designed to be iterative, with results from all Themes feeding into one another. Theme 1 compiles and analyzes existing documents and empirical data sets to examine policy dynamics in EC-12 and PSE in relation to Canadian sustainability issues.

## Research Projects and Objectives

- The **Document Analysis** examines non-sustainability-specific and sustainability-specific policy to better understand how ministries of education and school divisions (EC-12), post-secondary institutions (PSE), and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) are engaging with sustainability

## Sustainability Census of Canadian Ministries of Education and School Divisions

SEPN has conducted a census of sustainability features in all 13 provincial and territorial ministries of education and each of Canada's 389 school divisions (also otherwise known as school boards or school districts) in Canada. This census provides us with a better understanding of where and how sustainability is being included in education policy across Canada (see page 8 for a summary of the findings). For the ministry of education part of the census, the research team collected all policies, strategic plans, overarching curriculum guides/frameworks, and annual reports for each ministry of education. The census examined whether the ministry had:

- A sustainability-related policy
- Mandates related to sustainable or green school operations, and Green School certifications or designations
- Developed sustainability-related curriculum available through the ministry
- Conducted sustainability-related research or community engagement
- Discussed sustainability-related activities in its annual reports or strategic plans

For the school division census, geographic characteristics (e.g., province/territory, latitude and longitude of the division's administrative centre) and division characteristics (e.g., language of instruction, plan/policy related to Aboriginal or multicultural education, type of school division, number of schools in the division, student population) were collected. A variety of sustainability-related variables were also collected including whether the school division had:

- A sustainability policy
- Mandates related to sustainability or environmental certification programs (specifically, EcoSchools or Brundtland Green Schools)
- Sustainability staff
- Signed a sustainability or environmental declaration

## Sustainability Census of Canadian Post-Secondary Education

SEPN has also collected and analyzed publicly available data on sustainability initiatives for all Canadian accredited 220 post-secondary institutions (see pages 9 and 10 of this report for a summary of the results). The team developed Sustainability Initiative (SI) Scores which ranked institutions on their uptake of four high-level sustainability initiatives:

- Undertaking a sustainability assessment
- Signing a national or international environmental or sustainability declaration
- Having a sustainability office or officer
- Having a sustainability policy

## Content Analysis of Policy Documents

SEPN has analyzed sustainability specific and non-sustainability-specific policy documents from all 13 provincial and territorial ministries of education and a sample of 50 PSE institutions.

- For non-sustainability specific high-level documents, SEPN examined key themes and priorities indicated in the documents including priorities as suggested in the policies' text, how those priorities link to broader government policy, and how other priorities are being articulated in relation to (or not) priorities of sustainability
- Sustainability-specific documents underwent a parallel content analysis, with a focus on sustainability-specific themes and language in policies and plans including approaches to sustainability and points of definitional trajectories, policy mobility, and points of tension among approaches

## Database Resources

SEPN has conducted several systematic literature reviews and carried out large-scale, national-level data collection to collect relevant policy documents. As a result, SEPN has created a substantial data management network and has a wide array of database resources at its disposal, including:

Type of Database	Description of Database	Number of Articles
Literature Review Databases	Systematic literature review on policy and sustainability/environmental education in EC-12	292
	Systematic literature review of educational research on sustainability in PSE	117
	Review of survey research design, questionnaire design, and data collection methods	102
	Review of methods for researching inter-organizational networks	150
Databases	Highest level non-sustainability-specific and sustainability-specific policy documents from all provincial and territorial ministries of education and AANDC (e.g., annual reports, curriculum foundational documents)	106
	A census of sustainability features in all 220 accredited Canadian PSE institutions	N/A
	A census of sustainability features in all 13 ministries of education and all 389 school divisions	N/A
	All university- and college-wide sustainability policies/plans from the 110 Canadian PSE institutions with sustainability policies/plans	115
	Strategic plans and other foundational documents, including completed sustainability assessments, from a sample of 50 PSE institutions in all 13 provinces and territories	200+
	All highest-level policy documents from each provincial and territorial ministry in Canada, including mission statements, the ministry's key act, and other high-level policy documents	415
	High-level non-sustainability and sustainability document database of Canadian federal government & Pan-Canadian sustainability documents	82
	High-level document database of international documents regarding sustainability in education	47

## Highly Qualified Personnel

Between 2012-2014, SEPN worked with 3 post-doctoral fellows, 8 Master's students, 8 PhD students, 4 graduate research assistants, and 2 research associates.

To further graduate student training, all SEPN students complete research assistant duties directly related to SEPN's larger National project. Graduate students supported with graduate student stipends are expected to use SEPN data for their major project, thesis, or dissertation.

Some graduate students are paired with Partner and Contributor Organizations to ensure the development of theses and major projects that are answering questions that further both SEPN's program of research and organizational mandates. For example, our first Master's student worked closely with Organizational Partner, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), in developing her thesis research.

# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

## SUSTAINABILITY CENSUS OF CANADIAN MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION & SCHOOL DIVISIONS

SEPN conducted a census of sustainability features in all 13 provincial and territorial ministries of education and each of Canada's 389 school divisions, boards, and districts in Canada.

### SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES

#### At Ministries of Education

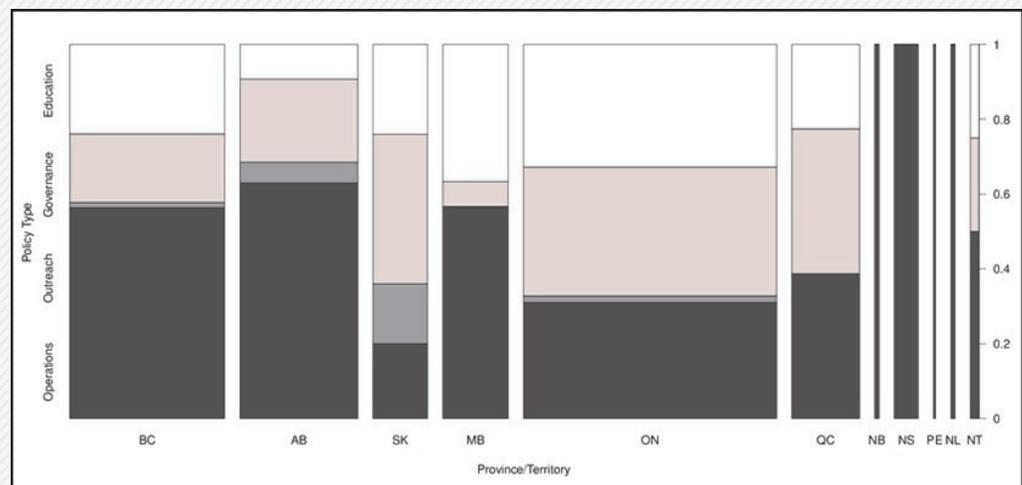
British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, and the Territories had sustainability-specific policies.

- The majority of sustainability-specific policies dealt with curriculum, then governance and operations.
- All provinces except Ontario had publicly available overarching curriculum frameworks with a focus on sustainability.
- All frameworks except BC's integrated components of sustainability.

#### At School Divisions

**58% of Canada's 389 school divisions had policies with a focus on sustainability.**

- Ontario had the highest rate of policy adoption (86% of divisions) whereas Yukon and Nunavut had the lowest rate (0%).
- 162 of sustainability-specific policies dealt with operations. Of those, 76 (47%) dealt with waste and 75 (46%) dealt with energy.
- 29% of all policies dealt with governance.
- 27% of all policies dealt with curriculum.



### SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATIONS

**31% of 389 school divisions had undertaken some form of sustainability certification.**

- EcoSchools and Bruntland Schools were the most common certification types.
- EcoSchools was used exclusively in Ontario: 64% of its school divisions had EcoSchools.
- Bruntland Schools were mainly located in Québec: 90% of Québec's school divisions had Bruntland schools.

School divisions with Bruntland Schools tended not to have policies, while divisions with EcoSchools almost always had policies.

- 96% of divisions with EcoSchool certification had policies whereas 51% of divisions without EcoSchool certification had policies.

### SUSTAINABILITY STAFF

**Only 8% of school divisions had staff members dedicated to sustainability initiatives.**

- Of note was that all of New Brunswick's seven school divisions had staff focused on sustainability efforts; and school divisions with sustainability staff tended to have more policies.

# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

## SUSTAINABILITY CENSUS OF CANADIAN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

SEPN carried out a sustainability census to assess the leadership of sustainability initiatives in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Highlights of the results are presented below. The full results are in press with the *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*.

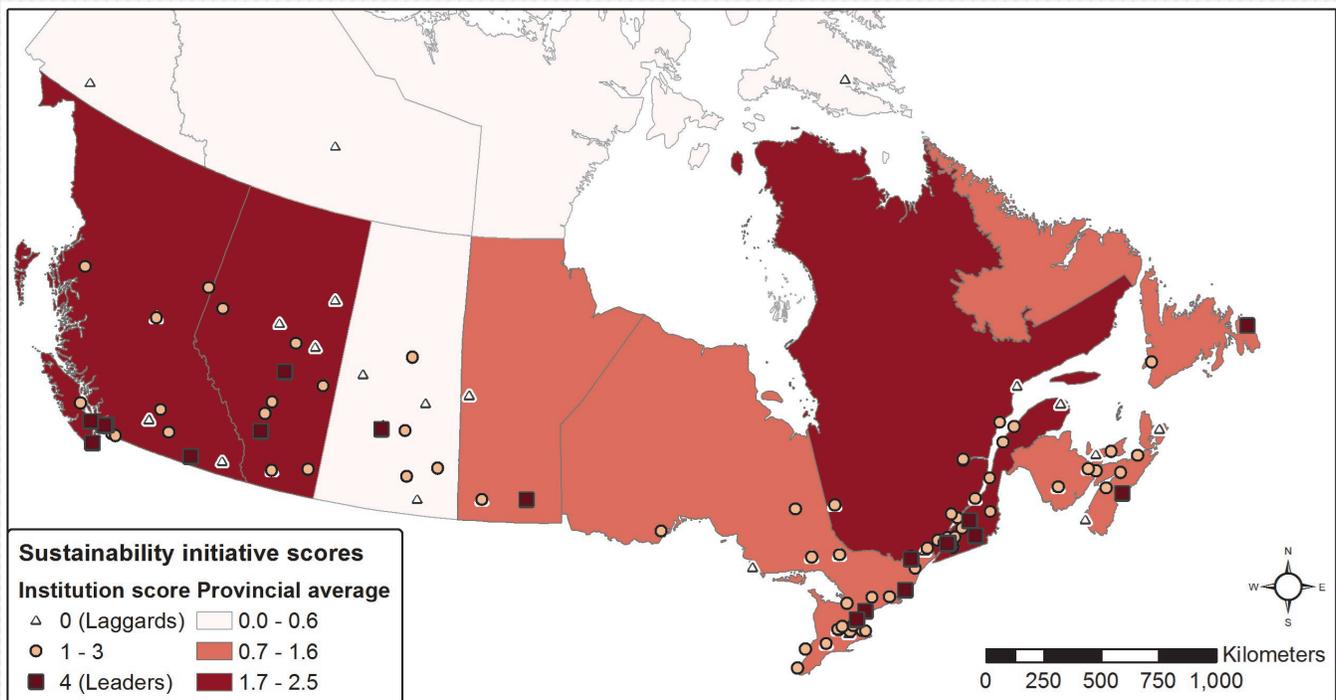
**SEPN analyzed and scored all 220 accredited post-secondary institutions in Canada on their uptake of four high-level Sustainability Initiatives (SI):**

1. Undertaking a sustainability assessment
2. Signing a national or international environmental or sustainability declaration
3. Having a sustainability office or officer
4. Having sustainability policies

An institution received one point for having a sustainability initiative in each category.

### LEADERS AND LAGGARDS

**SI Leaders** were institutions with all four sustainability initiatives.  
**SI Laggards** were institutions with no sustainability initiatives.



## ASSESSMENT, OFFICE & POLICY

**A total of 96 (44%) of the 220 institutions had conducted sustainability assessments.**

- Half, or 110, of the 220 institutions had a sustainability policy.
- One-third of institutions had a sustainability office or officer.

**The study identified strong linkages between the three sustainability initiatives of assessment, office(r), and policy, suggesting that the uptake of one might encourage the uptake of others.**

- For example, of the 96 institutions that had conducted assessments, 83 had policies.
- In contrast, there was a weak relationship between signing a declaration and undertaking other sustainability initiatives: of the 99 institutions that signed a declaration since 1990, one third had not undertaken any other sustainability initiative.

## PROVINCIAL POLICIES & CULTURES

**A total of 85% and 67% of institutions in Québec and British Columbia, respectively, had sustainability policies.**

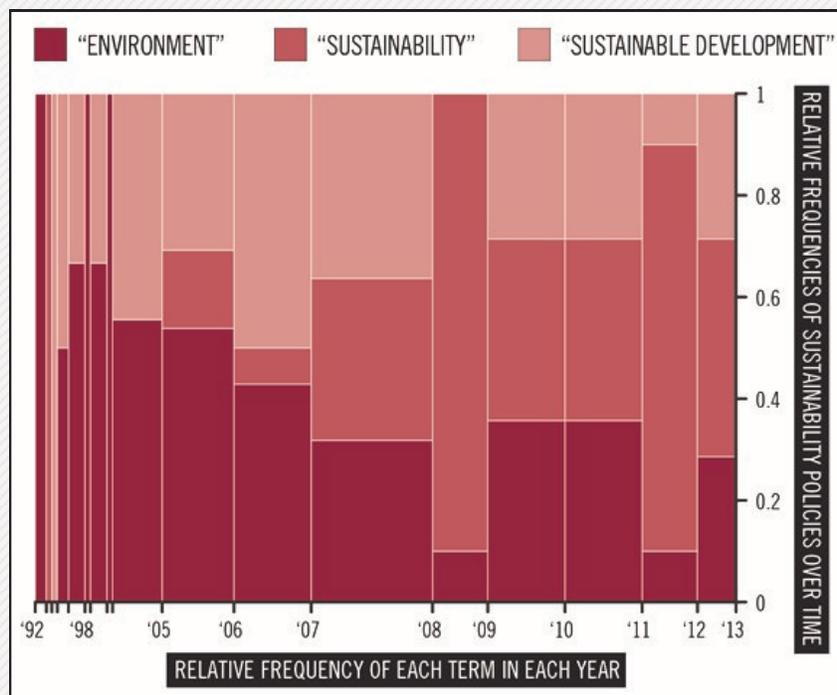
- Higher engagement levels in BC and Québec's smaller communities resulted in those provinces having the highest average rates of sustainability initiatives. This means it is more than simply the characteristics of large urban centres that match up with sustainability issues, but that there also may be unique factors existing in smaller Québec and BC communities, or that they are part of a broader provincial culture that encourages sustainability initiatives.

**A potential example of the leadership role that provinces can play through provincial policy can be seen with Québec's Cégep Vert program, which played a significant role in influencing the uptake of institutional sustainability initiatives.**

- 92% of Cégeps had policies compared to 51% and 31% of Universities and Colleges, respectively.
- Only 2 institutions in Saskatchewan had policies and no institutions in New Brunswick or the Territories had policies.

## CHANGE IN TERMINOLOGY

SEPN identified a change in policy terminology used over time, with the term 'sustainable development' decreasing slightly in policies over time, with a more substantial drop in the number of policies using the terminology of 'environment.' 'Sustainability' is currently the most commonly used term. Use of the term 'sustainability' also increased as community population size increased, as well as being the term of choice in Ontario and the three Prairie provinces.



# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

## GREENWASHING, NEOLIBERALISM, & POLICY MOBILITY IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

SEPN has conducted a case study of terms used in sustainability policy titles to better understand the extent to which neoliberalization may be active in how sustainability is understood in education, and how these two ideas may be traveling together in their global mobility and local uptake. Full results are in press and will be available in an upcoming issue of *Environmental Education Research*.

### SUSTAINABILITY AS A VEHICULAR IDEA

Sustainability and neoliberalism are mobile concepts and processes that when twinned, undermine the way environmental sustainability is being developed and implemented in education policy and practice.

Sustainability is a flexible and vague concept which can be absorbed and used in different, even opposing, contexts. Cynically, it can serve to propel or greenwash economic interest; optimistically, it can allow for coalition building.

### Mobility in Policy Studies

Mobility approaches in policy studies focus on the movement of objects, people, and ideas around the globe. Rather than having a clear centre point or origin, policy is a product of its surroundings, influenced by ideas that are both situated and mobile, producing variations developed in response to different policy contexts and relationships.

Mobility approaches to policy development are critical of the traditional policy transfer-diffusion approach which focuses on policies as discrete objects which can be 'transferred' in whole to other locations and networks. Rather, mobility approaches emphasize the movement and transformation of policies as bits and pieces.

Policy actors respond simultaneously to multiple policymaking networks, and to the tensions and contradictions that come along with these policy domains. They are part of a growing cadre of cosmopolitan policy advocates, aided by new communications technologies, who produce flashy, vehicular ideas that are responsive to specific policy networks, think tanks, and media landscapes, and exert political influence through networks and the creation of new networks.

Policy mobility is also a useful frame for understanding sustainability as a vehicular idea in relation to processes of neoliberalization.



### Neoliberalization of Sustainability in Education Policy

Neoliberalism is likewise a vehicular concept travelling globally, taking specific forms in different locales, rather than presenting one single form of neoliberalism. It must be described and analyzed as a process in relation to particular sites and situations, rather than discussing "neoliberalism" in sweeping catch-all ways.

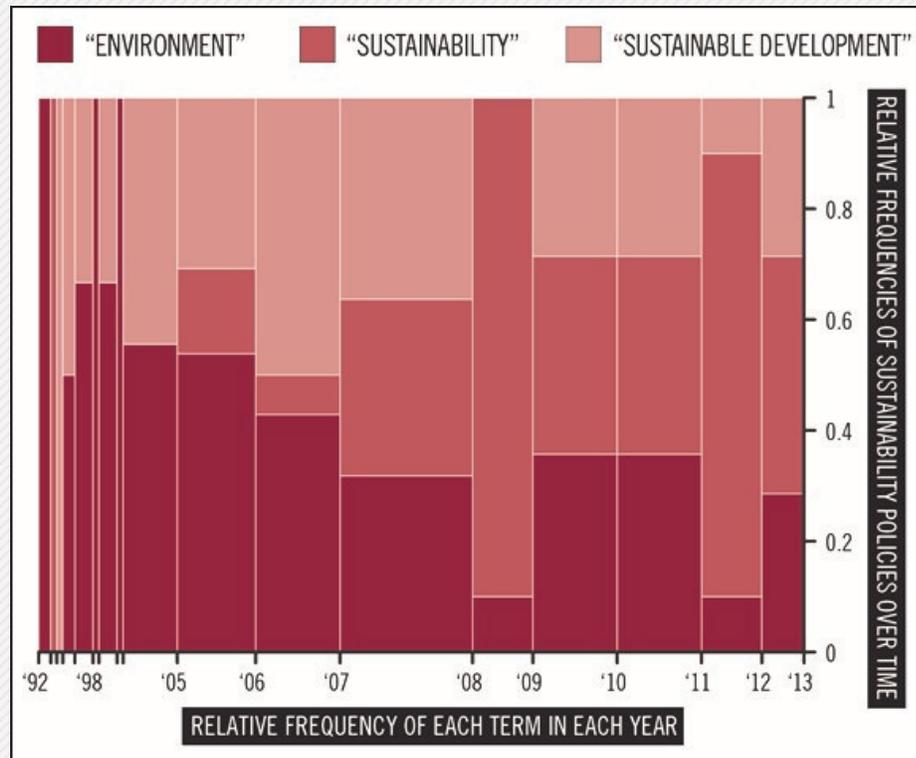
Over the last several decades, policy development and practice have been increasingly influenced by the penetration of neoliberal processes into public spaces and bodies. Neoliberalization reframes educational institutions as competitive and commodified entities, and applies private sector management practices in this public sector. Campuses, teaching and research priorities become commodified and privatized, amplifying relations of competition, and an overall growing emphasis on measurable outputs. Neoliberalization filters not only how education is conceptualized and shaped through policy, but also how sustainability in education is understood and addressed.

Sustainability in education is deeply susceptible to being framed in exclusively economic terms, which closes down more possibilities that are just and environmentally sustainable than what neoliberalism has to offer. Claims of a sustainability focus are increasingly a selling point in attracting students, faculty, and funders. In the worst case scenario of institutional greenwashing, sustainability policies and related high level initiatives such as signing of declarations, act as 'sustainability fixes,' giving the appearance of taking steps towards protecting the environment while a higher prioritization remains given to the institution's economic considerations.

## Researching Sustainability in the Education Policy of Post-secondary Institutions

SEPN's initial analysis suggests that increasing numbers of post-secondary institutions in Canada are developing sustainability-related policies and found shifts in language around environmental sustainability over the past several decades.

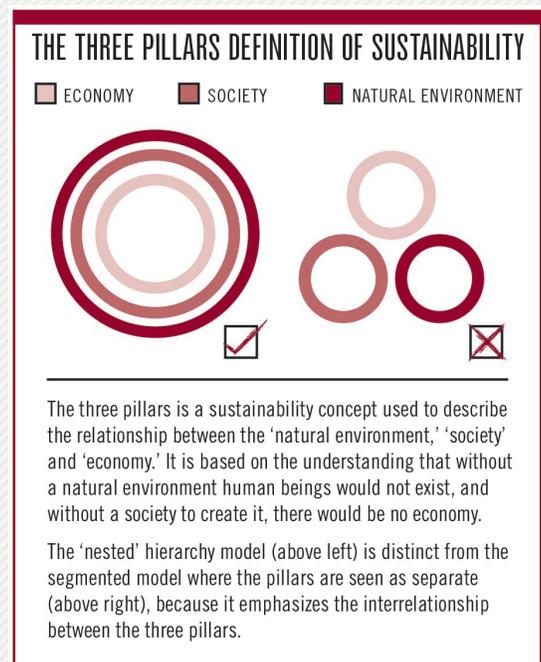
- 69 out of 110 institutions with sustainability policies included definitions of their terminology, from higher uses of the term 'environment' to increasing uses of 'sustainable development' and now most recently, 'sustainability,' which is the current most frequently used term.



- Almost 1/3 of the policies included a definition of sustainability which included a focus on the natural environment, society, and economy, or what is often called the “three pillars” definition of sustainability. However, a review of the policies found no mention of any prioritization of these three elements.
- The vagueness of a sustainability definition without explicit prioritization runs the risk of enabling sustainability as a vehicular idea that functions as both a floating signifier through its ambiguity (anything can be ‘greenwashed’ while business continues as usual), as well as enabling sustainability to be ‘fixed’ in certain ways (i.e., giving priority to a particular pillar).

For this reason, it is important to look at how sustainability is understood in education policies, and whether priorities of neoliberalization are embedded within how sustainability is conceptualized and practiced.

**Segmenting the three pillars can thus insulate the economy pillar from those of social and environmental sustainability, enabling a form of neoliberal sustainability.**



# Technical Solutions

Because SEPN's membership is geographically dispersed, we have been exploring different ways of working together productively to ensure team members are meaningfully engaged in the research. We have found technical solutions to be highly important for supporting team member involvement.

## Collaborative Research Tools

SEPN's data collection and analysis are being undertaken collaboratively by team members in different universities and with input from Organizational Partners and Contributors. SEPN's project management system includes collaborative work tools for work planning, a central filing system, and discussion fora. SEPN also has an NVivo Server, which allows the team to collaboratively analyze policy documents and other data from anywhere in the country.



## Video- and Tele-conferencing

Because research team members from across the country meet regularly to discuss the research, video- and tele-conferencing play a large role in SEPN's work; we videoconference for smaller meetings using free online tools and teleconference for larger meetings.

In 2012, Dr. McKenzie was awarded a Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Leaders Opportunity Fund of \$250,000. This grant has funded the purchase of technical equipment such as a webcam, monitor, and wireless conference calling VOIP system for the Network Management Office.

## Website and Mapping Platform

The CFI grant also funded the development of SEPN's website, which launched in Fall 2014. The website will include a portal for Network researchers to access collaborative data collection and analysis tools as well as project management and work tools. The website also plays a large role in SEPN's knowledge mobilization strategy and houses SEPN's academic and popular publications. It is extremely important that SEPN's research is used by different stakeholders and the website includes fact sheets, infographics, and maps representing SEPN's research data in addition to scholarly publications.



Because so much of SEPN's research involves collecting comparative data from across the country, we have developed an online mapping platform to represent the EC-12 and PSE census data. Other data, such as the national survey results, will be added as they are collected and compiled.

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# THEME 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Theme 2 became active in September 2013 and involves in-depth examinations of how sustainability-related education policy and practice are being experienced at local, regional, and national levels by community members in multiple sectors. The goals of this part of the project include obtaining a deeper understanding of the impact of gaps in education policy and practice and broadening SEPN's membership. Theme 2 examines the question: *What can we learn from people on the ground about how sustainability-related policies are developed and enacted?*

## Research Projects and Objectives

- A **National Survey** examines different groups' experiences of how sustainability is being taken up in education at the EC-12 and PSE levels across Canada. This will include examining respondents' awareness of existing educational policies and practices focusing on sustainability education in their region and views on barriers and facilitators of sustainability uptake across the Canadian education system. Data are to be collected in Fall 2014.
- **Site Analyses**, slated to begin in 2015, will examine how sustainability is being taken up in education in EC-12 and PSE contexts (6 sites in each subtheme) in detail.

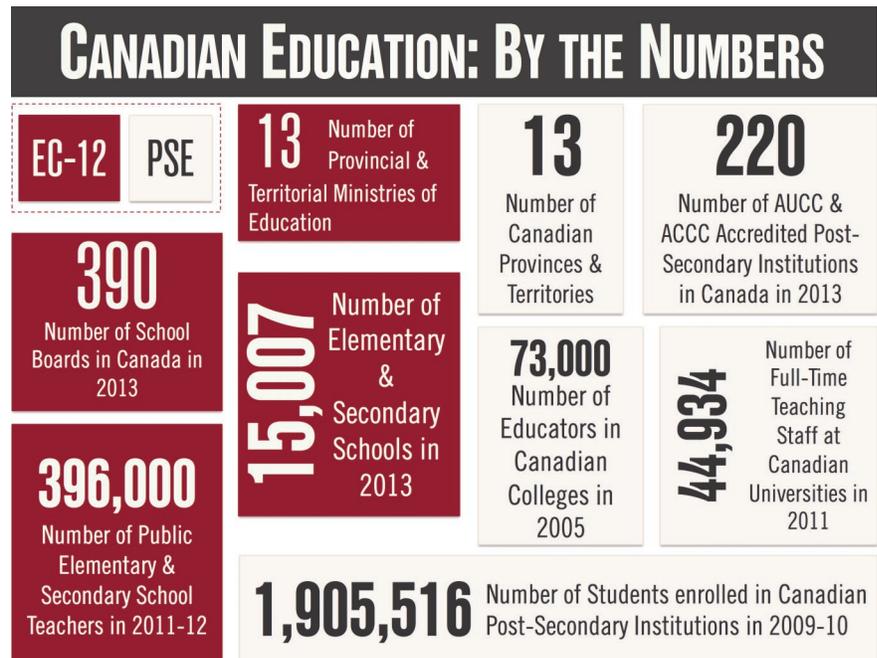
## National Survey

Developmental work began on the survey in September 2013 with the creation of a working group, which includes representatives from Partner Organizations Learning for a Sustainable Future and the Sierra Youth Coalition. In December 2013, a portion of the group met at the University of Saskatchewan for a 2-day brainstorming session to develop the research design and survey questionnaire.

The national survey asks the question: "What are the relationships between sustainability policies and sustainability practices in a given region?" Comprised of two parts, the survey examines sustainability practices (Part A) and factors that may have influenced policy development and implementation (Part B) across the EC-12 and PSE education systems in Canada.

Pilot testing and data collection from stakeholders at all levels of the EC-12 (teachers, principals, administrators, facilities staff, sustainability staff, directors/superintendents of education, and ministers of education) and PSE (students, faculty/sessional instructors, facilities staff, sustainability staff, and university presidents) took place in Fall 2014.

By examining the relationships between sustainability policies and sustainability practices as well as the drivers and barriers that led to their development, SEPN will be able to develop a greater understanding of facilitators and barriers associated with enacting education policies related to sustainability.



# THEME 3: KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

Theme 3 aims to mobilize new knowledge and best practices regarding education policy and practice regarding sustainability to impact the development of existing policies and practices in EC-12 and PSE.

## Research Projects and Objectives

- An evaluation of SEPN's **Network Organizational Learning**, conducted in all years of the grant is intended to deepen understanding of sustainability issues in education within SEPN and contribute to the evolution of education policy and practice in SEPN member organizations due to collaboration
- **Model Mobilization**, which will begin in 2016, in which SEPN will develop research-based, situated models of exemplary policy and practice at EC-12 and PSE levels. The models will be shared with stakeholders through community mobilization meetings
- **Professional and Scholarly Dissemination** in all years of the grant, to mobilize research results to regional, national, and international audiences

## Network Organizational Learning Evaluation

SEPN's Network Organizational Learning (NOL) project is a multi-method, multi-year evaluation. The evaluation includes data collection via surveys, focus groups, and statistics tracking. Evaluation tools were developed in 2013 to examine:

- Organizational strengths
- Existing partnerships and networks
- Information sharing, problem solving, and resource development dynamics within the Network

In addition to monitoring social learning processes and identifying impacts and challenges to Network development, this portion of the research allows SEPN to track indicators for reporting to funders and stakeholders and to assist the team in identifying ways in which team members' professional networks could be mobilized to maximize SEPN's impact.

Method of Data Collection	Description	Indicators Tracked
<b>Network Management Office Statistics</b>	Database compiled by the Project Manager via tracking indicators	Change in Network size; types of training/mentoring opportunities provided; meeting attendance; types of publications; co-authoring academic, organizational partners, and organizational contributors
<b>Research Team Member Survey</b>	Conducted annually in January and February as part of financial reporting	Types of new collaborations among Network members; skills acquired by students, partners, collaborators, and others; type of partner and contributor contributions; social network analysis
<b>Focus Groups</b>	To provide insight on collaborative activities undertaken by Network members as a result of the partnership to identify key lessons about the process of partnering	Satisfaction with participation in the research and the partnership's impact on members, related to SSHRC evaluation areas

# Windhorse Farm Writing Retreat

## Team Building in an Acadian Forest

SEPN held its first writing workshop in May 2013 with 10 team members. A wide variety of SEPN academic team members attended including several graduate students from Dalhousie University and the University of Saskatchewan as well as a post-doctoral fellow, SEPN's Project Manager, Theme 1 Academic Lead, and Principal Investigator. Organizational representatives from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Partner Organization and Theme 1 Leader) and Sustainability Solutions Group (Contributor Organization) also attended.

The purpose of the writing workshop was to identify potential publications that could be produced out of literature reviews and research projects conducted in the 2012-2013 academic year. At the beginning of the weeklong workshop, participants reviewed writing principals and brainstormed scholarly and non-scholarly publications. After deciding which publication ideas were most promising, the team broke into small co-writing groups of two to three to produce outlines and draft publications. The larger group re-convened several times to provide feedback related to content, structure, and style.

The writing workshop was held at the beautiful Windhorse Farm, a 170 year-old sustainable forestry farm located in endangered Acadian Forest in Nova Scotia. While at the farm, the team was able to take in the forest by walking the incredible trails and enjoying the farm's nearly 25 year-old permaculture garden, complete with beaver pond! The team was also able to participate in two guided forest treks—a contemplative walking tour and a night walk.

## Impact

The retreat resulted in several scholarly publications and publications geared towards more public venues:

<b>Scholarly Publication Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anchor paper outlining SEPN's grounded critical policy analysis approach</li><li>• Paper connecting neoliberalism, policy mobility, and PSE</li><li>• Review of trends in Theme 1 census data on PSE</li><li>• Review of existing policy research on sustainability in EC-12</li></ul>
<b>Popular Publication Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of existing empirical research on sustainability in PSE (the scholarly version was published in the May issue of the journal <i>Sustainability</i>)</li><li>• Review of methods of analyzing interorganizational networks</li></ul>

Since the retreat, three of the publications have been submitted for publication and one of the submissions resulted in SEPN being featured in *University Affairs*.



# PROFESSIONAL AND SCHOLARLY DISSEMINATION

SEPN intends for its research results to reach regional, national, and international audiences throughout the life of the Network. For every scholarly article published, the Network has committed to producing companion “popular publications” in the form of infographics and fact sheets for more general audiences. Visit SEPN’s website for copies of our publications.

## Scholarly Publications

- Vaughter, P., Wright, T., McKenzie, M., & Lidstone, L. (2013). Greening the ivory tower: A review of educational research on sustainability in post-secondary education. *Sustainability, 5*, 2252-2271.
- Beveridge, D., McKenzie, M., Vaughter, P., & Wright, T. (in press). Sustainability in Canadian post-secondary institutions: The interrelationships among sustainability initiatives and geographic and institutional characteristics. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*.
- Lidstone, L., Wright, T., & Sherren, K. (in press). An analysis of Canadian STARS-rated higher education sustainability policies. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*.
- Lidstone, L., Wright, T., & Sherren, K. (in press). Canadian STARS-rated campus sustainability plans: Priorities, plan creation and design. *Sustainability*.
- McKenzie, M., Bieler, A., & McNeil, R. (in press). Education policy mobility: Reimagining sustainability in neoliberal times. *Environmental Education Research*.
- Vaughter, P., Wright, T., & Herbert, Y. (in review). 50 shades of green: An examination of sustainability policy on Canadian campuses. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*.
- Vaughter, P., McKenzie, M., Lidstone, L., & Wright, T. (in review). Campus sustainability governance in Canada: A content analysis of post-secondary institutions’ sustainability policies. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*.

## Conference Presentations

- Haluza-DeLay, R., McKenzie, M., & Vaughter, P. (2013, June). A grounded approach to researching sustainability in educational policy and practice. Presented at the 7th Annual World Environmental Education Congress, Marrakech, Morocco.
- Lidstone, L., Wright, T., & Sherren, K. (2013, August). Greening the ivory tower: An analysis of sustainability policy in post-secondary education. Presented at the Canadian Association of Geographers 2013 Annual Meeting, St. John's, Newfoundland.
- Vaughter, P. (2013, October). 50 shades of green: An examination of sustainability policy on Canadian campuses. Presented at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education 2013 Conference and Expo, Nashville, United States of America.

## News Features

- Charbonneau, L. (October 2013). Research network to examine universities’ sustainability efforts. *University Affairs*. From <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/research-network-to-examine-universities-sustainability.aspx>.
- Canadian Association of Principals. (June 2014). Sustainability and Education Policy Network (SEPN) is looking for help from schools with an important survey. From <http://cdnprincipals.org/blog/2014/06/08/sustainability-and-education-policy-network-sepn-is-looking-for-help-from-schools-with-an-important-survey>.



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