

Community-Based Consultation Summary Report: Importance of Post-Secondary Learning in Williams Lake

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Submitted to: TRU Board of Governors

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*What does the future
OF POST-SECONDARY
look like in Williams Lake?*

Your voice makes a difference

Possible closure of post-secondary learning in Williams Lake could mean:

-  Loss of local jobs
-  Reduced access to education
-  Fewer opportunities for youth & mature adults
-  Impacts on local businesses & services

Everyone's input matters.

 Residents, businesses, organizations, students and community members **we want to hear from you!**

TAKE 5 MINUTES
to share your thoughts!



Scan the QR code

-  What does TRU mean to you?
-  How could the current TRU campus serve the community in the future?
-  What should decision makers know?

Created through the work of:
Revive Thrive
Communities Ending Poverty Leadership Table
Social Planning Council of Williams Lake & Area (SPC)

YOUR VOICE WILL HELP INFORM DECISIONS
being shared with:

- Municipal leadership
- Regional District partners
- TRU Board of Governors

Thank you for helping shape what comes next.

Questions? Email Angelika at angelika.sellick@wlspc.ca

  Proudly supported by the PG Prosperity Foundation & Tamarack Community

Introduction

Following the announcement in March of 2026 that the future of TRU in Williams Lake as a local in-person post-secondary campus was under discussion, local mobilization in Williams Lake quickly took place. The *Revive Thrive Poverty Reduction Initiative* with the Social Planning Council of Williams Lake & Area organized to collect voices and data from community members about their experiences of and future vision for post-secondary in Williams Lake through an online survey. The survey was launched on April 27 and as of June 11, 315 residents, business owners, organizational leaders, students, and community members have responded. Recognizing that education is a pathway out of poverty, the Social Planning Council of Williams Lake & Area wishes to present the community's response to the TRU Board of Governors within this summary report.

Images used throughout this report were taken from the online WL Tribune, 100 Mile Free Press, TRU News Room and www.tru.ca.

Survey Respondents

- The response pool **reflects a broad cross-section of community stakeholders** rather than being dominated by any single sector.
- The largest segment of respondents were general Williams Lake residents/community members (27%).
- Education (14.2%), rural communities (14.9%), and Indigenous organizations (11.3%) were strongly represented.
- It is noteworthy that multiple Nations and Indigenous organizations are represented rather than a single group.
- Nearly 1 in 10 respondents came from health and human services sectors (10.6%).
- Business/trades representation was also significant at 9.9%.
- No single sector represents more than one-third of respondents. The consultation appears to have reached a broad range of stakeholders, increasing confidence that the results reflect a wide spectrum of community perspectives.

Reported Reach of TRU in Williams Lake & Area

TRU Williams Lake appears to have a strong presence in the community and is connected to many residents through family, friends, and colleagues.

- Only 4% of respondents report not knowing anyone who has studied through TRU Williams Lake. This means that approximately 96% know at least one person who has attended the campus for continuing education, trades training, or degree studies.
- About 29% report knowing 5–10 people who have studied at TRU Williams Lake.

While the quantitative data shows most respondents know between 1 and 10 people who attended TRU, the written responses reveal:

- Extensive networks of former students
- Multi-generational participation
- Strong workforce and trades impacts
- Significant influence in schools and Indigenous communities



A clear message coming from the comments is that TRU Williams Lake **is deeply embedded in the social fabric of the region**. The comments portray TRU as a long-standing community asset that has influenced families, careers, education pathways, and workforce development across the Cariboo-Chilcotin region.

Perspectives on TRU's Educational Functions & Execution

Respondents do not view the campus through a single lens. Instead, they see equal value in **degree programs, trades and workforce training, short-term certifications, and rural access to education.**

The near-identical response levels across the above mentioned top four categories indicate a strong consensus that all forms of local post-secondary education are valuable and that the campus serves many different groups and needs across the region.

When asked how well TRU Williams Lake courses and programs meets student needs, the analysis from 187 survey ratings (1-5 scale) provided by former/current students show:

- 5 (Very well met needs): 91 responses → ~46%
- 4 (Well met needs): 80 responses → ~41%
- 3 (Moderately met needs): 22 responses → ~11%
- 2 (Poorly met needs): 2 responses → ~1%
- 1 (Very poorly): 0 responses → 0%

Students overwhelmingly report that TRU Williams Lake programs meet their needs well, with an average rating above 4.3/5 and nearly 9 in 10 respondents giving positive ratings (4 or 5).



Perceived Impact of TRU in Williams Lake & Area

Responses suggest that TRU Williams Lake is not just an educational institution—it is a **direct pathway to employment and career transformation** for individuals and families across the region.

The comments strongly indicate that TRU Williams Lake is:

1. A **direct job creator**: Through practicums, certifications, and employer partnerships.
2. A **workforce pipeline**: Especially for healthcare, education, and trades.
3. A **barrier-removing institution**: Allowing people to access employment training without leaving the community.
4. A **driver of economic mobility**: Enabling career entry, advancement, and higher wages.



When asked what work experiences were made possible because of post-secondary studies through Williams Lake TRU, former/current students responded as follows. It is worthy to note that respondents rarely selected just one outcome, and many selected all five major impacts.

Impact	Approximate Prevalence
Increased skill	Very high (appears in roughly 80–90% of responses)
Doorway to further education	Very high (roughly 75–85%)
Improved confidence	High (roughly 65–75%)
Higher pay	High (roughly 60–70%)
Wider community connections	Moderate to high (roughly 50–65%)

Former/current students were also asked about the broader (non-employment) impacts of studying at TRU Williams Lake, focusing on personal development, education pathways, and social outcomes. Respondents could select multiple answers, so results reflect overlapping benefits.

Results Overview

Impact	Responses
Increased skill	176
Improved confidence	140
Doorway to further education	143
Higher pay	124
Wider community connections	124
Other	23

The table indicates that TRU Williams Lake is **perceived as a transformational institution**. It not only helps people gain skills and income, but also builds confidence, expands opportunities for further education, and strengthens community ties. The most important theme is that its impact is holistic—affecting education, personal development, economic outcomes, and social connection all at once.



Accessibility, Participation, and Retention

Nearly half of respondents who are/were students at TRU Williams Lake say they would not have been able to pursue education elsewhere, and most of the rest report significant financial, family, or logistical barriers. Only a small minority indicate they could realistically have studied outside Williams Lake without major challenges.

The results suggest that respondents view TRU Williams Lake as more than an educational institution—it is also **a community retention asset**.

- A clear majority of respondents (65%), in general, believe that the presence of TRU Williams Lake has helped keep students in the region who otherwise might have left to study elsewhere.

Key themes that emerged were:

1. **Accessibility:** The campus makes post-secondary education possible for people who cannot easily relocate because of finances, work, family responsibilities, or personal circumstances.
2. **Educational Participation:** Many respondents suggest that without TRU, some people would not have pursued post-secondary education at all.
3. **Community Retention:** For those who would have studied elsewhere, TRU provides an opportunity to remain connected to family, community, culture, employment, and support networks while pursuing education.



TRU Williams Lake as a Community Hub

Across all sections, the written responses consistently show that TRU Williams Lake is viewed less as just an educational institution and more as a community infrastructure hub that enables:

- Local access to education and training
- Workforce development in key regional sectors
- Strong retention of residents in the community
- Community programming and cultural events



From the 61 organizational/community/business responses to the question about how they have partnered with TRU in the past, the responses show that Williams Lake TRU functions as a **multi-purpose community anchor institution**.

Partnerships fall into four main roles:

- Education and training provider
- Community space and event venue
- Workforce and practicum partner
- Network/coordination hub for local organizations

Integration of Graduates into Local Organizations, Businesses, and Community Employers

Responses indicates that TRU Williams Lake is not producing graduates for a single employer or sector, but for a distributed regional labour market.

TRU Williams Lake graduates:

- are widely present across many local organizations
- form key staffing pipelines in larger institutions
- and contribute to both small-scale community employment and larger systemic workforce needs

There is clear evidence of **widespread hiring of TRU Williams Lake graduates**, even though many organizations either don't formally track numbers, or are small organizations with limited hiring capacity.

Organizations and community employers perceive the benefits of TRU Williams Lake services for their staff and clients as positive with multi-benefit impact including:

- increased skill
- more job options
- access to further education
- improved confidence
- higher pay
- stronger community connections

Most respondents selected multiple benefits at the same time, not just one. This suggests TRU services are viewed as **comprehensive workforce and community development supports**, not single-purpose training.

Expanding into the Future

Responses demonstrate a fairly consistent set of priorities around how respondents believe TRU Williams Lake should expand into in the future.

This dataset shows that stakeholders see the future of TRU Williams Lake as evolving in three main directions:

1. Workforce engine (core expectation)

- trades
- healthcare
- apprenticeships
- certifications

2. Education laddering hub (expansion expectation)

- full degrees locally
- teacher/social work/nursing completion
- bridging and access pathways

3. Regional development hub (emerging vision)

- Indigenous-led education
- climate/forestry/agriculture research
- community partnerships
- shared civic infrastructure

Stakeholders want TRU Williams Lake to expand from a primarily entry-level and vocational campus into a full-spectrum regional institution that supports workforce training, degree completion, Indigenous partnership, and applied regional problem-solving.

The strongest underlying demand is not just “more programs,” but **more local completion pathways** so people do not have to leave the region to finish education or enter key professions.

Questions/Concerns from Community to the TRU Board of Governors

The respondents in no way see a lack of need for TRU Williams Lake; rather, **they see a lack of investment, program expansion, and institutional commitment.**

Most respondents view closure as solving the wrong problem. They repeatedly argue that enrollment challenges stem from limited programming, reduced course offerings, staffing challenges, and insufficient support from the main campus—not from a lack of demand for post-secondary education in the region.

Across the responses, several questions emerge repeatedly:

- Why is closure being considered instead of program expansion or restructuring?
- What alternatives to closure have been evaluated?
- How were rural and Indigenous communities consulted?
- How much of TRU's budget is actually tied to the Williams Lake campus?
- What programs have been moved from Williams Lake to Kamloops and why?
- How will TRU address local labour shortages in healthcare and trades if the campus closes?
- How will students who cannot relocate access postsecondary education?
- Why not expand high-demand programs such as nursing, trades, forestry, and early childhood education?

Summary of Findings & Key Expectations for Moving Forward

All in all, the survey responses show a consistent message about the perceived importance of post-secondary education in Williams Lake. While there is variation in wording and detail, the comments are remarkably aligned in themes, intensity, and concern.

Taken together, the responses indicate:

- A strong social mandate to maintain or expand post-secondary education in Williams Lake
- A shared belief that it is essential for economic resilience, social mobility, and community survival
- High emotional investment, suggesting the issue is seen as existential for the community's future rather than a technical restructuring question



Responses reflect a high-consensus community position that post-secondary education in Williams Lake is **viewed as essential public infrastructure, critical to equity, economic stability, population retention, and community identity.**

In practical terms, the responses suggest three strong expectations:

1. Do not reduce or remove local post-secondary access
2. Improve and expand program relevance (especially healthcare, trades, and university pathways)
3. Treat the campus as a regional service hub, not just an educational site