

NEXTcast Season 2 Episode 3: Tayler Buchanan and the Office of Sustainability

In this episode, Kristin Valois speaks with the Office of Sustainability's Tayler Buchanan about the work she does to promote sustainability at Humber, and the learning opportunities the Office creates with faculty and select programs.

Kristin Valois: Hello and welcome to NEXTcast, a podcast about teaching and learning at Humber College. I'm Kristin Valois, an editorial assistant at Humber Press. This week we're in studio with Tayler Buchanan from The Office of Sustainability Team. Welcome to NEXTcast, Tayler.

Tayler Buchanan: Thank you for having me.

Kristin Valois: Full disclosure, we know each other a little bit, we sat next to each other for a year in our postgrad program here at Humber, but now you're working for The Office of Sustainability.

Tayler Buchanan: Yes. I've actually ... I was recently hired last month, so it's still fairly new for me, but I'm working as the communication and events intern, which is really fun. Basically what that means is that, I am assisting with a lot of the marketing and promotional material and I help organize and run the events on campus, while also posting and engaging with students and staff on social media.

Kristin Valois: Okay. It sounds like you've got a lot on your plate, that's incredible.

Tayler Buchanan: It takes some multitasking, yeah.

Kristin Valois: So we were ... As we were walking around the Lakeshore campus earlier we noticed The Office of Sustainability has a ton, a big presence, there's lots of signage. I'm wondering if you can just let us know what the Office has introduced to Humber this year.

Tayler Buchanan: Yeah, definitely. One of our main campaigns this year actually, it encompasses all three of our core priorities, so those priorities are: reducing our major impacts and to be environmental stewards, also that ensure students are learning about sustainability and encourages a safe and healthy and sustainable campus for the Humber community. One of our main campaigns this year is called Take Back The Tap, that's actually-

Kristin Valois: Oh, I have seen it.

Taylor Buchanan: A hashtag. Oh, you've seen it. Okay, great, I'm glad to hear that because we always try, especially our main office is located at the North campus, but we try to get to Lakeshore as often as possible and promote it on both sides. But basically, it encompasses all three because we're trying to reduce our impact on the environment by encouraging students and staff to, instead of using single use plastic bottled water, to bring in their own reusable bottles. That's essentially what the campaign is about. In doing that, by encouraging them, we're also trying to educate the Humber community about the effects that plastic and in particular plastic water bottles, has on our environment. That's something that we are planning on doing for the entire year, so we've worked really hard, part of that is bringing in, making sure that we have refill stations available on both campuses.

Kristin Valois: I use those a lot actually.

Taylor Buchanan: Yeah. We actually, that was part of our project as well in the past year is, to just make sure that they're always around and available, so that it is an option if you do bring in your reusable bottle, that you'll always have access to clean water as well and it's there for you to use. That's something we're trying to push and encourage this year for sure.

Kristin Valois: Aside from Take Back The Tap, what else do you guys have in the works?

Taylor Buchanan: In order, Take Back The Tap is a one of our main ones right now and we do have ... Instead of just the campaign, we are trying to also have displays that go along with it. Actually right now in E-Concourse at North campus in front of Gourmet Express, our design intern Brad, he created this whale tail sculpture and we filled it with plastic bottles that we've actually collected from campus. That right now is in front of Gourmet Express, it's beautiful and it's incredible that he did this all on his own, but we are planning on actually moving that to the library next, again, North Campus, Second Floor, LRC building. And then eventually it will come to Lakeshore though and it's going to be in the Interpretive Centre.

Kristin Valois: Oh, okay.

Taylor Buchanan: That's another thing we're working on in order just to build up this campaign, keep it going. We don't want people to forget about it in a month, we're going to have this going on throughout the year and so we're going to have a whole display in the Interpretive Centre. It should be there by November 12th and it's going to be there for a couple months as well and again, the whale, whose name is Spyro by the way, you should throw that in there, is going to be moving around campus as

well. And we're trying to get it into residence buildings, we want to get it in faculty offices, just so that it could be there as a display and raise awareness about the campaign and what we're trying to do on campus.

Kristin Valois: I read today that there are over 300 courses that address one or more of the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability at Humber. I'm wondering if you can tell us a little bit about how The Office of Sustainability is collaborating with faculty and what programs are connected to the office.

Taylor Buchanan: Yeah, definitely. One of the main ways that we try to connect with students in particular is that, through the classroom level where we ... When invited, we will have class presentations as well, just to explain a little bit more about who we are and what we do. That's actually a way that we attract student volunteers as well because, we're a big campus, it's North, Lakeshore and Orangeville, not a lot of people can always know what's on each campus or what's going on. It just gives us a chance to explain what we do and for people really to just know that we exist by going to classrooms. Now, some new volunteer that we just had recently said, "I didn't even know you guys existed otherwise I would've volunteered two years ago when she first started." But now she's a volunteer.

Taylor Buchanan: It's stuff like that, just going classroom to classroom and talking to students, talking to faculty. This semester in particular though, we are working with specific programs as well, we do try to partner when we can and when we think it's a good fit, so this year we have ... We're partnering with Event Management Students at Lakeshore to run a sustainability event, which is going to be on November 26.

Kristin Valois: I need to stay tuned for more details.

Taylor Buchanan: Yeah, stay tuned. We also have ... This one's exciting too. We have a fashion event, so this one's going to be at North campus and it's going to be a career fashion event on November 21st, so that's something we're also helping out with as well. Usually we do a lot with the HRT students, which is the Recreation, Hospitality and Tourism students. We're going to be working with them at North again to run a faculty focus learning workshop event on November 20th and for Guelph-Humber students, because we can't afford ... We can't forget about them, Guelph-Humber is still part of us. We're going to be doing a non for profit course as a sponsor client for them to do some research for our office as well.

Tayler Buchanan: We are always looking for programs that I guess coincide with what we're doing, we think it's a good fit, but we're always looking for more opportunities as well, just spreading awareness about our office and whoever wants to partner with us or learn more about us, by all means reach out to myself or my manager Lindsay. We're always just open to hearing more ideas about what we could do together. Oh, and one more thing for faculty specifically because I've just been talking a lot about what we do for students, but we have a community of practice for faculty. That's for those who want to engage and discuss how to integrate sustainability into their classrooms and also support spreading the knowledge across the campus to all faculty. They meet just a few times a year, a handful of times a year and we offer them professional development sessions as well.

Kristin Valois: Oh, that's a great opportunity.

Tayler Buchanan: Yes.

Kristin Valois: Nice.

Tayler Buchanan: Definitely we focus on students, but we also want to include faculty as well and teach them ways to be more sustainable in their classrooms, because it doesn't come naturally to some people, right? If they maybe aren't as passionate about it or just don't have enough information, there are tools and techniques that we can offer you that can get you on the right track.

Kristin Valois: Yeah. That was actually going to lead to my next question is how maybe for our listeners, if you could give us an example of a way that a teacher can include sustainable measures in their classrooms.

Tayler Buchanan: Yeah, of course. It basically just starts with actually taking action and doing something about it. One way they can actually do that is by creating an entirely paperless course. We've been going that way with Humber Blackboard as well, but just to encourage more faculty to go entirely paperless, have all assignments handed online, that could be something very hopefully easy that they could-

Kristin Valois: Yeah. Well, easier for students too.

Tayler Buchanan: Easier for students. I know myself as well, when I was a student I didn't even have a printer at home, so I would come to class and sometimes running around last minute trying to get through the printer line up and all that. Just going entirely paperless is one way. Encourage using

reusable bottles, like we've said, or reusable utensils as well, that's another one.

Kristin Valois: Oh, right. Of course.

Taylor Buchanan: Yes. And definitely, this might be for some, but just encourage carpooling as well, I know sometimes it's difficult for students to get to know each other, sometimes they're a little shy, so if there's the facilitator in the classroom as the teacher who can maybe help organize, "Oh, you're from this area, you're from this area." And try to get carpooling together or even with other faculty as well for yourself, that's the way to do it also. We also have for faculty a sustainability toolkit, so that's available on our website, humber.ca/sustainability, it's under resources where you'll also find a few other things we have there. But this toolkit, it's available for download, it is for meetings and events, but I do see some things on here that can also cross over to the classroom as well, so something like reducing how much energy you use.

Taylor Buchanan: Just make sure that you're always turning off the lights or the projectors when they're not in use. That's something that even I noticed when I was in class, just things were left on for the next person to come in, but even turning it off for five minutes conserves energy. That's something that is easy to do as well. Like I mentioned waste management, so everything's available here for download, it's a really easy checklist even, so it could be used for events, but you can definitely find something you can also bring into the classroom as well.

Kristin Valois: It sounds like you're ... The Office is doing a ton to reach out to the Humber community, what's the feedback been like from faculty, from students, what have you heard?

Taylor Buchanan: Really, I think all the feedback has been really positive. I think that as the community, the Humber community realizes that sustainability is the way to go and we want to be leaders in that, not just followers of patterns and trends that are coming out. We're really trying to be a completely sustainable campus and we're doing that through things even like our infrastructure, the new buildings, they have solar panels, how can we ... If we're going to build and expand anyway, how can we do it in a sustainable way that gives back to not only our environment, but our community as well, because Humber is such a large campus where Humber North in Etobicoke, Rexdale it's huge, it's so big. Part of the community down here at Lakeshore with Culture Days, we just celebrated it with the Etobicoke Lakeshore, Humber is such a huge part of the community that it's about giving back and how can we do that?

Taylor Buchanan: Really I think everyone is onboard for that part of it. I can't imagine, it's been really positive, it's just a matter of giving students and faculty the tools and the knowledge to actually implement these sustainable practices that may not come naturally to everybody. While we're the Office of Sustainability, we are not solely in charge of everything that is sustainable on campus, so please don't bring us your recycling.

Kristin Valois: Has that happened?

Taylor Buchanan: It has on occasion.

Kristin Valois: No.

Taylor Buchanan: And that's fine, we do recycle it, but we are more ... We more want to be seen as the sustainability experts.

Kristin Valois: Right, of course.

Taylor Buchanan: If you have a question, if you have anything at all that you just want to ask, you need more information, then you would come to any anyone on the team and we can help you with that. Because it's such a huge campus and we are a smaller team that it's hard to know what's going on in each department, so really if you have any questions you can come to us.

Kristin Valois: Amazing.

Taylor Buchanan: And maybe recycle your own recycle. We can tell you where to go though, that's for sure.

Kristin Valois: What's next for The Office of Sustainability? Do you have big plans for 2019?

Taylor Buchanan: Oh for 2019, yes. Actually, this is the end of our five year plan that we had, our Strategic Plan for Sustainability, so we're just coming to an end. In 2019, we are planning to hold a big Sustainability Symposium in order to celebrate that, as well as our new goals that we're creating for the following next five years as well. That's something that we're going to start planning really soon, it's really exciting, it's going to be a big event, I can't wait and for me, I'm going to be a part of the planning which is going to be really exciting. As for the next couple of months, short term, we do have another event. It is going to be at the North campus so everyone has to make their way over, but it's a nature RX session. Basically what that is, it's gonna be a free session on October 18th from 2:30 to 3:30 and it's really ... It's supposed to be for Mental Health

Awareness Month as well, so we're trying to encourage reconnecting with nature, it's this great session led by Project Soul and he just takes you through the Arboretum.

Kristin Valois: Oh, I just went, it's beautiful.

Tayler Buchanan: Oh, did you? Yes.

Kristin Valois: Yeah.

Tayler Buchanan: It's the same, it's the same thing except because we are promoting it, so this one will be free cost, so spaces are limited though, so we'll be posting-

Kristin Valois: And registration.

Tayler Buchanan: Yeah, registration is necessary, we're going to have about 25 to 30 people, but this one is a complimentary class. If anyone's feeling a bit stressed or just needs a break, I encourage them to attend if they can.

Kristin Valois: I can't thank you enough for coming in to chat with us, I feel like I learned so much.

Tayler Buchanan: Can I ask you a question?

Kristin Valois: Oh, of course.

Tayler Buchanan: Are you going to take the pledge to Take Back The Tap?

Kristin Valois: How could I not?

Tayler Buchanan: Yes.

Kristin Valois: How could I not?

Tayler Buchanan: Okay, then we can ... Then this is good. Success.

Nathan Whitlock: NEXTcast is produced by Kristin Valois on behalf of Humber Press and the creative productions team, at The Centre for Teaching and Learning at Humber College. Special thanks to Santino Pannozzo. To suggest stories for future episodes in NEXTcast or to let us know what you think, email humberpress@humber.ca. That's humberpress@humber.ca. To read issues of NEXT magazine, please visit humberpress.com and to learn more about the support offered to faculty for The Centre for Teaching

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