



COMPOST KING

Recycling is always on Allan King's mind, and King is always on the go. He has been on campus for 30 years—since the inception of the original institution when he was hired to oversee the construction of the first building.

King personally is behind many of the sustainable initiatives on campus, and he was thinking about sustainability long before any formal policies or programs were initiated. King has applied his personal commitment to sustainability to his role in the facilities office.

"In recycling you can never be satisfied that it is in place and complete. It's an area that is constantly evolving," he says. As recycling evolves, so does King's role. He's a guy with many connections, and if he doesn't have the right one, he'll find it.

King takes pride in finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of a busy and growing university campus. Take, for example, the large amount of unrecyclable Styrofoam on campus. It is now being collected by a local inventor who is using the material in place of crushed gravel in building foundations or underground services. And what about the many used wooden pallets on campus? An entrepreneur is using them to build lawn furniture.

King claps his hands in acknowledgement of a job well done after each story he tells—the connection is made, the waste is reduced, and he can move on to the next solution.

King and his colleagues have taken pride in building a sustainable campus and are striving to make it easy for the whole campus community to participate. UBC's Okanagan campus seeks to be the greenest campus in Canada, which is no small undertaking. A task of this magnitude requires the participation and dedication of the entire campus community.

"Everyone has to be on board and be conscious of what they do with waste—is it compostable, recyclable, or refundable?" asks King. "It takes all of us to pitch in to be able to make it work."

Waste is an inevitable part of human activity and with landfill capacity diminishing, waste management is becoming an increasingly compelling issue.

In 2008, the campus conducted a waste audit, collecting a day's waste from seven buildings. The results necessitated a call for action: 42 per cent of the waste collected was recyclable material, and 30 per cent was compostable material.

The campus responded by implementing a composting program: breaking down organic materials to produce a nutrient-filled soil amendment.

"To me this isn't a job, this is from the heart."

Every kitchen facility on campus now has 20-gallon bins to collect an impressive 200 lbs of compostable materials daily. The contents are fed into a large 'Earth Tub,' which composts 150 lbs of organic waste per day and reduces the volume of the material by 75 per cent.

It's very much a hands-on process—each day King takes the Earth Tub "for a walk," rotating the cover's long handle, churning the large stainless steel auger through the compost inside. After two full rotations, the entire contents have been mixed. It's an exacting process that King watches over closely.

"Just like cooking, the right ingredients, in this case food scraps and bulking agents, and temperature have to be maintained," he says.

Once the Earth Tub's 4,000-lb capacity is reached, the high-quality compost inside will be used to enhance soil quality on the grounds, keeping a substantial amount of organic waste out of landfills and saving money on disposal costs.

