

A man wearing an orange hard hat, a red and black plaid shirt, and a high-visibility yellow and orange safety vest is looking down at a drone controller in his hands. In the background, a grey drone is flying in the air above a dense forest of evergreen trees. The scene is set outdoors during the day.

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**Centre of Forest  
Innovation**

**Report to Sector – March 2026**  
**Leif Helmer, Program Director**

# Pjila'si (Welcome)

NSCC acknowledges we are in Mi'kma'ki – the unceded territory and ancestral homeland of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Our relationship is based on a series of Peace and Friendship treaties between the Mi'kmaq Nation and the Crown, dating back to 1725.

In Nova Scotia we recognize that **We are all Treaty People.**

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# Advancing the Shift to Ecological Forestry

The Centre of Forest Innovation has completed its 5-year mandate from NS

We served as a training provider and funding resource, helping Nova Scotia adopt ecological forestry practices.

NSCC remains committed to Forest Sector work - training the next generation of forest professionals from diverse communities - to meet industry needs.

NSCC will support the Forest Sector in several ways going forward.



# Improved Provincial Capacity

- ❖ Completed **CoFI Facilities** at Truro Campus and currently utilizing a 400-acre demonstration forest at our Gittens Lodge nearby
- ❖ Expanded **Natural Resources & Environmental Technology** for the Truro campus (2021-2027)
- ❖ Delivered **Tree Marking** training in partnership with Forest ON to strengthen sustainable forest management practices
- ❖ Launched **Forest Geomatics & Biometrics Technology (2023) COGS**
- ❖ Delivered targeted short courses and micro-credentials in **biodiversity, silviculture, forest operations & treaty awareness**
- ❖ Supported the delivery of a 13-week **Mechanized Forest Equipment Operator** pilot program in 2025 to address workforce shortages

# Access, Inclusion & Outreach

## Centering Mi'kmaq Learners

- ❖ Provided 20 full Tuition credit bursaries each year
- ❖ Eligible for rural students in any forest sector-related program
- ❖ Partnership with Mi'kmaq Forestry Initiative
  - MFI liaison on core staff & curriculum decolonization
  - EarthKeepers training including cultural use of Ash

## Outreach & Engagement

- ❖ Based on a Marketing and Communications Plan (2021-25)
- ❖ Knowledge Mobilization Intention
  - ❖ Webinar series based on Innovation Funding Recipients
  - ❖ Hosted Forest Innovation Symposium & Sector Meetings
  - ❖ Supporting Atlantic Teachers Tours

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# Building Workforce Strength

## Student Work Integrated Learning

- ❖ Forest Futures placements with eligible Industry Hosts
  - 25 NRET work-integrated placements (2023–2025)
  - 10 additional placements anticipated (2026)
- ❖ Forest Ready mentorship pilot
  - 6 students, 6-month placements (2025-2027)

## Students are Supporting Key Work

- ❖ GIS mapping & data systems
- ❖ Old forest scoring
- ❖ Stewardship planning
- ❖ Certification coordination
- ❖ Landowner engagement





# Ecological Forestry Research

Advising the **Family Forest Network**, **ForestShare** and the **Ecological Forestry Research Initiative (EFRI)** teams exploring questions related to:

- Forest edge effects & blowdown
- Soil carbon dynamics
- Salvage harvest impacts
- Road networks
- Tree marking cost/benefit analysis
- Landowner engagement
- Post-wildfire regenerative tree planting

# Workforce Development

- ❖ Micro-credential programs for upskilling & reskilling
- ❖ New for NS sector-specific training across the province:
  - ❖ Forest Stewardship & Planning,
  - ❖ Tree Planting Safety & Production,
  - ❖ Clearing Saw Safety & Operations.
- ❖ Rapid development of short courses aligned with industry upon request. Contract or Continuing Education opportunities
- ❖ Pathways to Applied Research and Student Engagement
  - ❖ NSCC Student Research Network
  - ❖ NSCC-Mitacs Connectivity
  - ❖ NSCC Sprint Awards



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## New: Ecological Forestry Operations Planning

### Current status:

- ❖ 14 students accepted (May 2026 intake)
- ❖ FPRC audit scheduled for fall 2026
- ❖ Anticipated accreditation in Winter 2027

### Outcomes:

- ❖ This new NRET+ pathway is designed to meet national forest technologist standards.
- ❖ NSCC has initiated the FPRC Accreditation process this month
- ❖ NSCC will be first in Atlantic Canada

# NEW: Mechanized Forest Equipment Operator

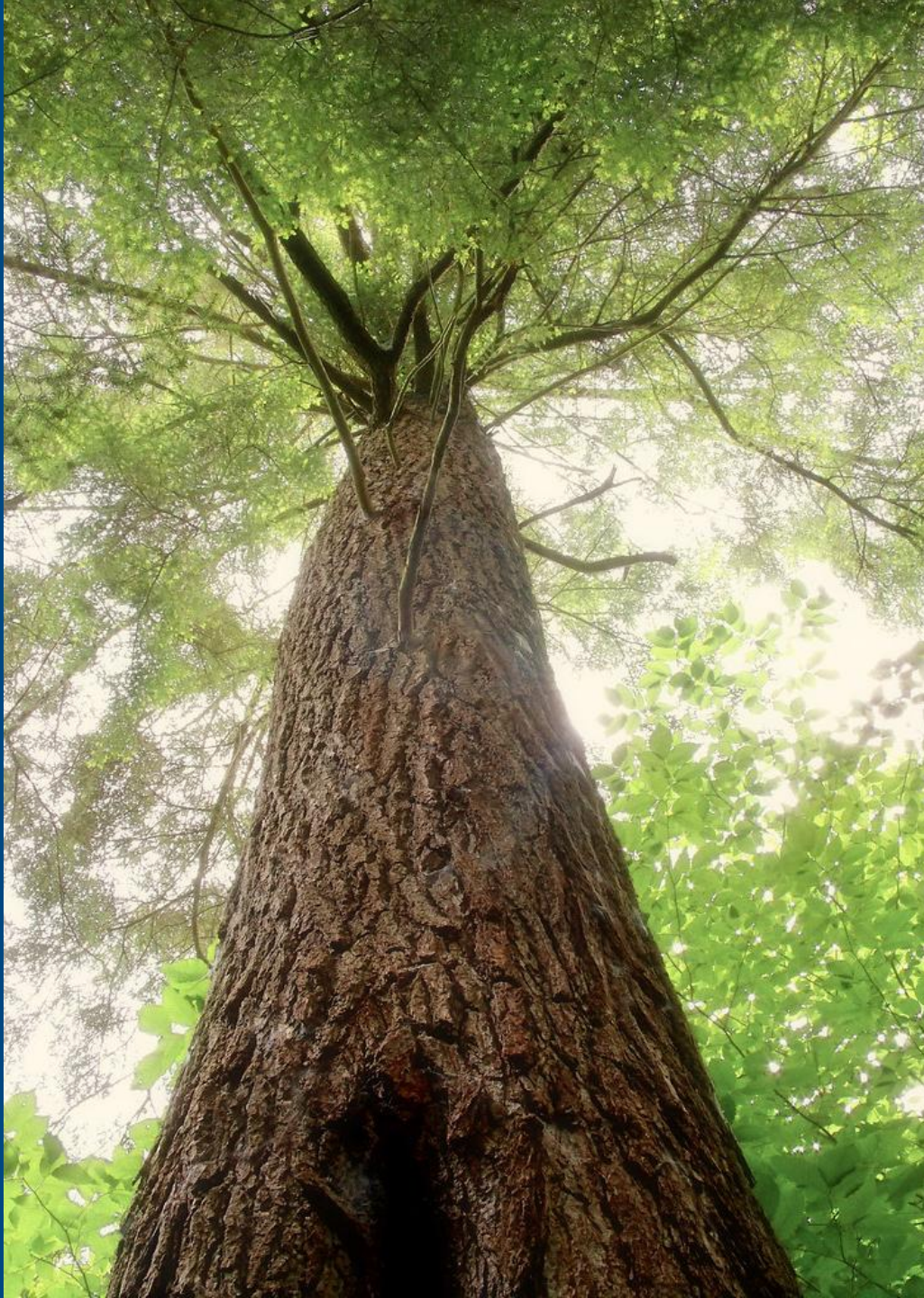
## Current status:

- ❖ Two new Mechanized Forest Equipment Operator (MFEO) cohorts open for April and September 2026 to meet growing sector demand

## Outcomes:

- ❖ This new 12 week pathway is designed to meet skillsets required for both Harvester and Forwarder
- ❖ These are newly designated trades in NS
- ❖ NSCC partners with NBCC and Westfor on this initiative.





## New: BioHeat Conversion & Carbon Capture Demo

### Current status:

- ❖ Ocean Super Cluster funded in late 2025
- ❖ **AcFor Energy** system deployment in fall 2026
- ❖ **pHathom Technologies** deployment in Winter 2027

### Outcomes:

- ❖ Additional Wood Heat market for large multi-use campus (SA)
- ❖ Scaled demonstration of Marine Carbon Capture Technology
- ❖ Substantial reduction in propane consumption, lower GHG
- ❖ **Learning Lab** concept employed for teaching, learning and applied research on BioEnergy and Ocean Technologies



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Thank you.

Questions welcome.