



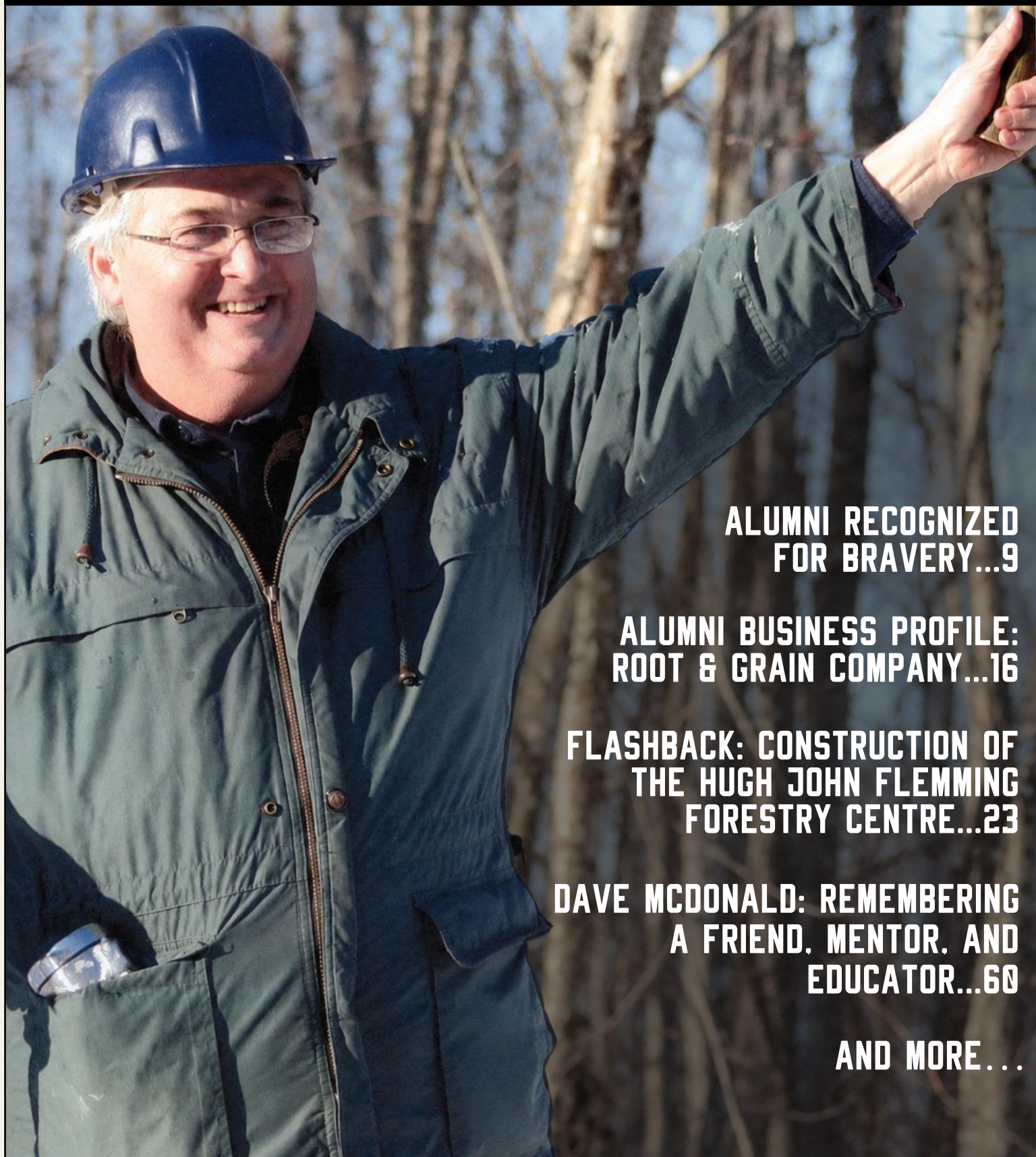
THE

FIRETOWER

MFRS/MCFT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

- CONNECTING ALUMNI
- CELEBRATING SHARED HISTORY
- SUPPORTING THE FUTURE

2026 - SUMMER - AUGUST 19



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A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Greetings alumni

When this issue of The Firetower is published, I will have been in my role as Executive Director for approximately two years. While I have learned a great deal during that time, I am still discovering more about the college's rich history.

Like many of you, my interest in forestry began at a young age. As a boy, I spent countless hours biking and hiking through my great-uncle's woodlot. I was fascinated by the different tree species, forest stands, and wildlife. This eventually led me to pursue a degree in forestry at UdeM.

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to work in a variety of roles, including harvesting, silviculture, and sawmill operations. I later joined the provincial government where I spent 15 years, much of which was with the Department of Education. Today, I own a small woodlot where I produce maple syrup and firewood, saw lumber, and clean up the occasional blowdown. Spending time on the land keeps me both mentally and physically fit, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

One of the greatest pleasures of my role is meeting graduates and hearing stories about their time at the college. Alumni proudly introduce themselves as the "Class of '75," the "Class of '98," or the "Class of 2013." Each person has a unique story to tell, whether a favourite instructor, a memorable class, or an experience that helped shape their career. While each of us has followed a different path, we all share a common connection: our passion for the forest.

One of the college's recent accomplishments has been the development of a new five-year strategic plan. Many of you contributed through consultations and interviews, and I want to sincerely thank you for sharing your perspectives. We greatly value the insights of our alumni as we shape the future of our institution. While our mission of delivering relevant and hands-on learning experiences to our students remains unchanged, the strategic plan will help guide us as we continue to grow and evolve.



The plan is built around four key themes:

- Growth and innovation
- Student experience
- Partnership and engagement
- People and culture

There is much more to come as we work toward achieving the outcomes outlined in our strategic plan over the next several years.

I am often asked, "How is the college doing?" I am pleased to say the future is bright. Student enrolment remains strong, and we continue to attract learners who are passionate about forestry and natural resources. We are committed to providing students with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience they need to succeed in an evolving industry.

This year also marks an important milestone. It has been 80 years since the college first began operations in 1946. Since then, more than 4,200 graduates have built careers in forestry and related fields, making a lasting impact across our province, the country, and beyond. That is a legacy we can all be proud of.

I also want to recognize the ongoing work to strengthen our Alumni Association. While much of that work happens behind the scenes, steady progress is being made to create new opportunities for alumni to reconnect with one another and with the college.

Although I am not a graduate of this institution, I feel a deep connection through the stories, memories, and pride that so many of you have shared with me. Those conversations remind me that the college is more than a place of learning; it is a community that continues to have a lasting impact on generations of graduates.

I look forward to meeting many more of you in the years ahead.

- Michel LeBlanc





2 ALUMNI ASSOCIATION UPDATE



Adrian Pearson, MCFT Instructor and Alumni Association President.

Greetings Alumni

First and foremost, it has indeed been some time since you last heard from the MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association. Beginning with the COVID pandemic, the Association went into what you might describe as a period of dormancy, as smaller volunteer associations sometimes do. Work continued, but at a slower pace, and the visibility of our association was, regrettably, poor. That being said, the year 2026 marks an exciting turning point. We are rolling again with renewed momentum and a deep commitment to bringing you the engaging alumni content you expect from us. In this short update I'd like to provide some details on the projects we've been working on, and those to come.



The main entrance to the Hugh John Flemming Forestry Centre, within which the MCFT Fredericton campus, and the MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association headquarters, are located.

The Association has launched a dedicated website to act as an online hub for everything alumni, accessible at the URL: **www.mfrsmcftalumni.org**. There you can view any MFRS, MCFT, and/or CTFM graduating class photo in high resolution; browse a complete database of all alumni decedents, organized by decade, with links to obituaries; view a map of the geographic distribution of known alumni across the world; browse photo galleries and other media content; explore and download digital versions of every Firetower newsletter issue to date; with much, much more to come in the following months.

To foster connection and casual community discussions, we've also recently launched a new Facebook

GET INVOLVED:

We're always looking for help putting together new issues of the Firetower newsletter. Now, we have a page set up on our website to collect relevant links and files. Of course, a simple email to alumniinfo@mcft.ca is always welcome.



group with the name **MFRS/MCFT/CTFM Alumni (1946 to Present)**. Moderated by the Association, this group has already grown to 525 alumni members, and exists to reconnect classmates, bring together graduates from across generations, and celebrate the experiences we had that shaped us into who we are today. Come join the conversation with seven decades of alumni members.

We've assumed control of the Alumni Jobs program at MCFT, which now features an active email distribution list of over 150 subscribers. Employers can advertise openings for free by submitting postings via email or our website. It's our hope that with some more exposure this can be a helpful tool for alumni of all ages looking for a change. I got my first job at MCFT as a Field Instructor back in the fall of 2015 via this service, and I've been here ever since.

As you can see, our signature and beloved newsletter, The Firetower, has received a major design makeover. With improved design, cleaner and consistent layouts, and improved readability comes a product that feels more authentic and professional. Having served as your sole editor since 2016, putting this newsletter together remains one of the things I enjoy the most about my involvement in the Association, and one of the things alumni appreciate the most.

Our work on improving the integrity of our alumni database also continues. Presently, we've catalogued every graduate from MFRS, MCFT, and CTFM by graduating year. This database has been an invaluable tool for us. With some improvements, we've already provided valuable statistics

and more precise figures to MCFT regarding things like total graduates across both campuses, Fish & Wildlife Technology program numbers, and female enrolment over time. It has also laid the foundation for our identification and tracking of alumni decedents. With further improvements, we intend to maintain it as the most accurate database of alumni that exists, but also to align it with other institutional data sources to learn more about who we truly are and where we've come from.

Our efforts to digitize and catalogue any and all print media related to the history of our institution continues. Over the last few months we've digitized and compiled thousands of photos, making our archive of institutionally relevant media the most complete that has ever existed. This includes any and all hard copy photos, slides, institutional documents, newspaper articles, magazine pieces, and more. We offer free digitization services for any alumni looking to preserve such material, and newly acquired office space on the MCFT campus means we now have the capacity to accept donations of physical materials of potential historical relevance - letters, a prospectus, textbooks, old assignments, photographs, tools, and the like.

Lastly, our scholarship program has been rolling without interruption, albeit quietly. In the last 5 years we've distributed over \$30,000 to promising young men and women across both Bathurst and Fredericton campuses. We have big plans to make our scholarship program more robust and increase access to premier forestry education for the next generation.

All this is to say that things are rolling again at the MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association Inc. Check us out, spread the word, and stay tuned for more news. As always, we can be reached at alumniinfo@mcft.ca if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you



DID YOU KNOW?

4285 Total Alumni

3816 MFRS/MCFT Alumni

469 CTFM Alumni

250 Fish & Wildlife Alumni

FACEBOOK LINK

The MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association has a new Facebook page with over 525 alumni members already. Come join the conversation, and don't forget to share with those alumni family and friends you know.





NEW ALUMNI WEBSITE:

CHECK US OUT AT MFRSMCFTALUMNI.ORG



[Home](#) [About](#) [Alumni](#) [Media Archive](#) [Newsletter](#) [Scholarships & Awards](#) [Support](#) [Contact](#)

MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association

Welcome to the Maritime Forest Ranger School / Maritime College of Forest Technology Alumni Association Inc. homepage. We're proud to represent MFRS, MCFT, and CTFM alumni across the Maritimes, Canada, and the world.



[Explore](#)

The MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association is very pleased to announce the launch of our new association website. This website was designed to connect alumni, centralize and make accessible alumni news and updates, platform historical media from our archives, and provide resources for alumni looking to get involved. This is just a quick summary of what you can find on our website now and in the future.

THE FIRETOWER

Every issue of the Firetower newsletter published, past or present, can be accessed digitally. This means you can read issues online on your preferred device and also download PDF versions.

ALUMNI MAP

We always say you can find an MFRS, MCFT, or CTFM alumni anywhere, but where exactly are we? On this page you can view anonymous location pins indicating the geographic distribution of alumni across the world.

Browse Issues of The Firetower



Volume 7 - Issue 1
July 2021

[Download this issue](#)



In this issue of *The Firetower: MFRS/MCFT Alumni Newsletter*, we profile the career of recently-retired MFRS and MCFT instructor Jim Bowen, who retired after a 23-year career in the spring of 2021; revisit the 2020-2021 graduating class and ceremony; visit the Rod O'Connell Commemorative Plaque along the Nepisiquit Trail; hear from John Biggs (c.1972) on his experience fighting fires in the Maritimes; update you on the Rudy Hanusiak Endowment Fund; and more.



Volume 6 - Issue 1
January 2020

[Download this issue](#)



In this issue of *The Firetower: MFRS/MCFT Alumni Newsletter*, we've included some pictures of a recent forestry sector BBQ held as part of orientation day 2020, profile students attending our Bathurst campus this year, take a trip back to the old Ranger School with Rick Zroback (c. 1973), remember the recently-departed Girv Harrison, profile the Fish & Wildlife Techniques I course, and much, much more.



Volume 5 - Issue 2
June 2019

[Download this issue](#)



In this issue of *The Firetower: MFRS/MCFT Alumni Newsletter*, we take a visual trip back in time to the old MFRS sawmill, profile recent summer practicums with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Meduxnekeag River Association, check out some alumni making news, relive a UNB woodsmen competition from 1980, profile the 2019 graduating class at the Fredericton campus, provide an update on the Rudy Hanusiak Endowment Fund, and much more.



CLASS PHOTOS AND NAMES



IN MEMORIAM DATABASE



A Leader in Forestry Education Since 1946

The following section has been adapted from Girvan Harrison's *So Ya Wanna be a Ranger?: The Maritime Forest Ranger School 1946-1995*. For those who haven't yet read this work, it's a wonderfully detailed account of the history of our institution, from its inception to the mid-1990s. Copies are available for purchase at MCFT reception should any of our readers be so inclined.



INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

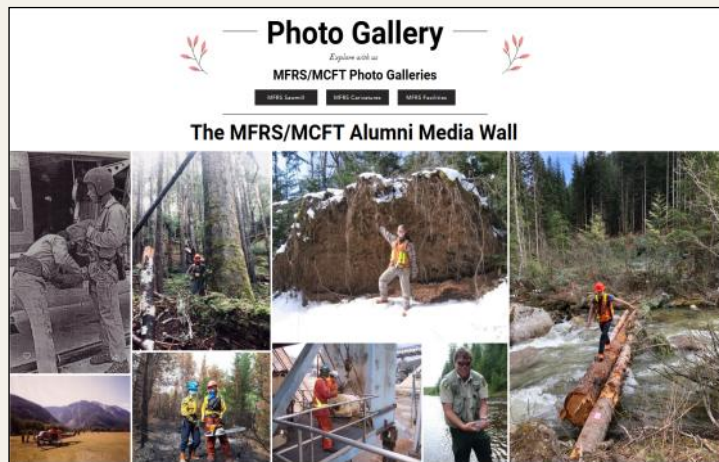


PHOTO GALLERIES

PHOTO GALLERIES

View quick pictures submitted by our alumni on the Media Wall, and more carefully curated photo galleries put together by the association ourselves on dedicated pages.

CLASS PHOTOS AND NAMES

View high-resolution photos of every graduating class for which a photo exist, from MFRS, MCFT, and/or CTFM, going back to 1947. Each photo allows for 500% zoom and includes names of individuals in the order they appear.

IN MEMORIAM DATABASE

Browse a list of every MFRS, MCFT, or CTFM alumni who information suggests is deceased. Entries are presented in table format by decade and, where possible, links to obituaries are included.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

Read an abbreviated version of the institution's history, from inception to 1995. While we work on the remaining years, you can learn about the establishment and operation of the institution in its formative stages through to the years immediately prior to the MCFT rebrand in 2003.

AND MORE...



ALUMNI RECOGNIZED FOR BRAVERY



From left to right: Premier Tim Houston, Tanner Fitzgerald, Brett Graham, Matt Gallant (MCFT 2008), Andrew O'Connor (MCFT 2023), Elijah DeCoste, Jamie Brown, and Natural Resource Minister Troy Rushton.

In June 2025, a crew of Forest Rangers from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources' Sustained Action Team was deployed to Saskatchewan in response to the 25LF-SHOE wildfire. During the deployment, several members of the crew were confronted with a critical emergency that demanded rapid decision-making and the provision of first aid under challenging circumstances. In recognition of their actions, they were recently presented with the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency's Award for Bravery. We spoke with Andrew O'Connor (MCFT 2023), one of the recipients, to learn more about the incident, the response, and the experience of being recognized for exceptional service.

Andrew, it's great to talk to you again. Before we get into what happened, start off by telling us what you were doing out in Saskatchewan in June of 2025.

Myself and 21 colleagues from the province of Nova Scotia that are all members of the Sustained Action Team were deployed to Saskatchewan last year in the spring to bolster their wildfire efforts. At that time, Saskatchewan had millions of hectares burned. It was a really bad year for them. We were stationed at a spot called Moose Horn Lodge near Candle Lake. The community was in danger of being flattened so that's where we were stationed.



What fire was it? Did it have a name?

Yes, it was the 25LF - SHOE Fire.

What kind of work were you doing in response to the fire?

Initially we were doing direct attacks. So we were flown into areas where we had pumps set up, and hoses, and we were doing direct attack on the flanks of the fires. Then we moved to this very rural community and were doing structure protection there. There was us and a team from British Columbia there and we had pumps and high volume hoses, air support, and that sort of thing. This was at the tail end of our deployment. So we were doing structure protection and that's what we were doing when the incident in question happened.

So tell me about the incident itself. What exactly happened?

It took place towards the end of our deployment. I think we had three or four days left. We were leaving Moose Horn Lodge when we noticed a vehicle on the side of the road. We'd seen this vehicle earlier in the day but thought nothing of it because this was a very remote area and we assumed someone had just gotten a flat tire. When we saw it the second time though, it had moved 30 km further along the road to roughly the entrance to the community we were at. Someone happened to notice someone actually hanging out of the vehicle as we drove by, so our crew decided to turn back around and discovered there was a bad domestic dispute in progress, and there had been some kind of vehicle accident as well. There were two individuals involved and they were both still there at the scene.



Andrew's crew at Little Bear Lake, northeast of Candle Lake.

Sounds like it had the potential to be a pretty volatile situation.

Yes, that's exactly right. There were signs of impairment from both of them too, and other things that were on the floor of the vehicle and laying around as well. So, yeah, that added another layer of complexity to it too. The male occupant was very aggressive and both of them were very volatile.

So when you initially recognized that it was a serious situation and you had to intervene, what was the dynamic? Did someone assume a leadership role? How did you delegate tasks?

So Jamie Brown was our Lead Crew Leader and when we got there he took charge. He was asking who is going to call 911, who has the first aid

training and that stuff. It was Tanner and Brett that had the first responder training. Jamie knew Matt and I had a law enforcement background so he tasked us with controlling the individuals and the scene. That was our job. I guess it can be tricky because there's always the worry of knives and needles and things like that. You don't want to have to go 1-on-1 with someone but I guess Matt and I knew a bit about that from our past careers. So not only were some of us performing first aid to ensure both of them were healthy and safe, but we had to make sure the male occupant didn't get hostile towards us or the other individual. Jamie tasked other people with getting communications together and other things too. We had some people even establish a perimeter as well.

It came together really well. In that kind of situation you're kind of fight or flight mode and it was nice to have someone stay calm, cool, and collected and keep things organized. All of us then collectively got the job done.

So did you just have to manage the situation until emergency services arrived?

Yes, that's correct. Like I said, because it was so rural we couldn't just call them and then leave. We had to stay for about 2 hours before emergency services showed up. While we were waiting there were other things going on too. We had noticed what looked like an attempt had been made to light the vehicle on fire too. So we were basically performing first aid to prevent blood loss and at the same time diffusing a situation that was very hostile until EMS could show up.

It's worth noting that about an hour into this situation an ambulance drove by and we flagged them down but they already had a patient on board so they couldn't stop. But those medical personnel knew the names of the people we'd encountered. We came to realize that maybe this was more common than we thought.

When EMS did show up what did they tell you?

When the RCMP showed up they were thankful that we had stopped. The one individual was handcuffed and brought away and then the ambulance came. The medics commented that the first aid performed on the one victim had, in their opinion, been life saving. Her pulse and breathing were apparently low and they said she likely wouldn't have survived if we hadn't intervened when we did.



Andrew, this is an incredible story. It sounds like your experience working as a team was really important.

Yeah, I mean your team is everything and you really lean on them. That's one thing I learned at MCFT that's stuck with me. It's not only what you can do and that you have them in front and beside you to help, but also that you can lean on them if things go sour. I was very independent going to school and I learned you can't always do it on your own. I think I took that advice with me when I graduated and it helped me here.

I think it was the minister saying that it's kind of ingrained in us Maritimers. Where some people might just drive by and think it's not their issue, but we just want to help and know when we need to act.

Absolutely. So what happened once you got back to Nova Scotia?

It was nice that we weren't just kind of forgotten, you know? We got support from both provinces. They sent a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team out to ask collectively as a group if we were mentally and physically doing alright, and to see if it was bothering anybody or anything. They made a point of checking in on us. So the support we got at the time and as a follow up was great.

So tell me about the award and when it was presented to you.

It's an award for bravery through the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency essentially for going above and beyond the call of duty. We were asked about the middle of June if we were interested in attending a small

ceremony and minister Rushton and premier Houston were there. The gave us the award and congratulated us and everything. It was a short time but it was nice.

This story is a great lesson in leadership. It sounds like great work from you and the members of your team. Many here at MCFT remarked it came as no surprise to hear you, in particular, were the recipient of an award like this.

Thank you. I appreciate that and it's nice to hear. I'm a very introverted person so I guess I don't like taking compliments, but it's good to break down that wall. Sometimes you have to realize that people are happy and proud of what you do. So, you know, absorb that and keep striving for better in life.

Thank you very much for your time Andrew. We appreciate it.

No problem at all.



HELP US BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE FIRETOWER

Whether a quick email or a written article—we're always looking for new stories for the next issue of The Firetower Newsletter. Learn more:



The medals presented to Andrew and his 5 other crew members on behalf of the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, at a small awards ceremony in June of 2026.



Andrew O'Connor (4th from left) and his crew hold up the Nova Scotia flag during their deployment to north central Saskatchewan in the spring of 2025.



BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: JORIS WIERSINGA



Joris, who still wears the same cruising vest he did at MCFT!

Hello alumni!

My name is Joris Wiersinga and I am an MCFT graduate from the class of 2016. Since then, I've also been the European Representative on the alumni association board. In 2014, I came to Canada to study at MCFT and after graduation I worked for the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) and Forest Protection Limited (FPL) collecting samples and data on spruce budworm in northern New Brunswick. After a while, I moved to Bridgewater Nova Scotia where I picked up a job as the operations supervisor at WestFor. I stayed with WestFor for a few years before eventually returning to the Netherlands in 2019.

I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to live and work in the Maritimes. It helped make me into the man I am today. After a few years in Nova Scotia my VISA expired and it felt like a good moment to return back home to the Netherlands. It didn't take long to find a job in the Netherlands that suited me, and I now work as an instructor at Zone.college in the city of Zwolle, where I teach Nature Conservation and Forest Management.

Forestry over here is a bit different. We don't practice it like in Canada. For starters, we have very little forest and are bound by European rules and regulations (which is for the best). They basically oblige us to maintain, or improve, biodiversity specifically in our natural areas.



The view from the front of Joris' classroom at Zone.college in Zwolle, Netherlands.



For example, we do have a bit of Douglas Fir, but when we harvest them we don't want another rotation of Fir alone. Instead, we want a more biodiverse forest to replace it. Production and harvesting of timber are rarely the purpose of forestry over here; recreation and biodiversity drive most decisions and management plans. How do we pay for all this? Mostly with subsidies and grants from the national or European government. It's a whole different game out here. Considering only 11% of our tiny country is forested (about 365,000 hectares of woodland in total) we maintain and manage it carefully. For example, we are only legally able to make openings a maximum of 0.3 hectares in size in the canopy of a stand of timber.

You might know the Netherlands for the farm fields and historic cities, but there is more to my country than forests, farm fields, and cities. You might also know the Dutch for our ways of managing water. Half our country is actually below sea level. We have a lot of big rivers that find their way to the sea at our coast, and these estuaries are always teeming with life. There again we strive to conserve what we have. There are gorgeous fens, unique peat bogs home to a species of butterfly not found anywhere else in the world (Dutch Large Copper), and more Scottish Highland cows than they actually have in Scotland. They browse and graze in a lot of the natural areas and are chosen because of their docile behavior, mixing well with visitors to these areas.

All and all, I'm happy to call the Netherlands my home and would like to invite you to have a look "across the pond" if you have the chance. Forget Amsterdam and come visit the Veluwe to see the red deer, wild boars, and flying deer (an enormous indigenous endangered beetle with antlers).

Once a Ranger, always a Ranger.

- Joris Wiersinga





CMTs IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Gregor Wilson, an MCFT class of 2026 alumni, submitted these photos from his time working as a Trainee Field Technologist for Tyhee Forestry Consultants in Smithers, British Columbia, in summer of 2023. They depict culturally modified trees (CMTs), which are living or dead trees that have been visibly altered by Indigenous or historic peoples as part of their traditional land use. In each case, they'd first be photographed, flagged, marked with GPS, and then an archaeologist would be consulted.



ALUMNI RECOGNIZED

The following text is taken from the Forest Nova Scotia Facebook page:

At this year's AGM, the NSFTA was pleased to announce Ian Gunn as the recipient of the Hank W. Blenis Technician of the Year Award. Ian graduated from MFRS in 1993 and has worked with the Department of Natural Resources until his retirement in 2025. He has also been a dedicated volunteer and held leadership roles in many organizations including the East River St Mary's Fire Dept, Northeastern Christmas Tree Association and NSFTA. Ian exemplifies what it means to be a good forest technician in Nova Scotia, and his example has been an inspiration to many throughout his career. Congrats Ian!





6

ALUMNI BUSINESS PROFILE: ROOT & GRAIN CO.



Chloe Ferguson of Root & Grain Company, and her mentor Dale Smearer.

Just before we begin, can you let our readers know where you're from and what year you graduated from MCFT?

I'm originally from Rexton, New Brunswick, and I graduated from MCFT in 2023.

What originally led you to choose MCFT, and forestry, as a field of study?

I grew up in a forestry family, so you could say it runs in my blood. Forestry has been a part of my family for generations, so I've always had deep roots in it. From a young age, I was always going to work with my dad, spending time in the woods and around equipment. He owns his own equipment and runs his own operation, and before that he worked for my grandfather, who also had his own forestry business. As I got older, I eventually started working for him as well. Those experiences gave me a real appreciation for the industry, but also for the outdoors and nature in general.

**CHECK OUT ROOT & GRAIN CO.
ON THEIR WEBSITE**



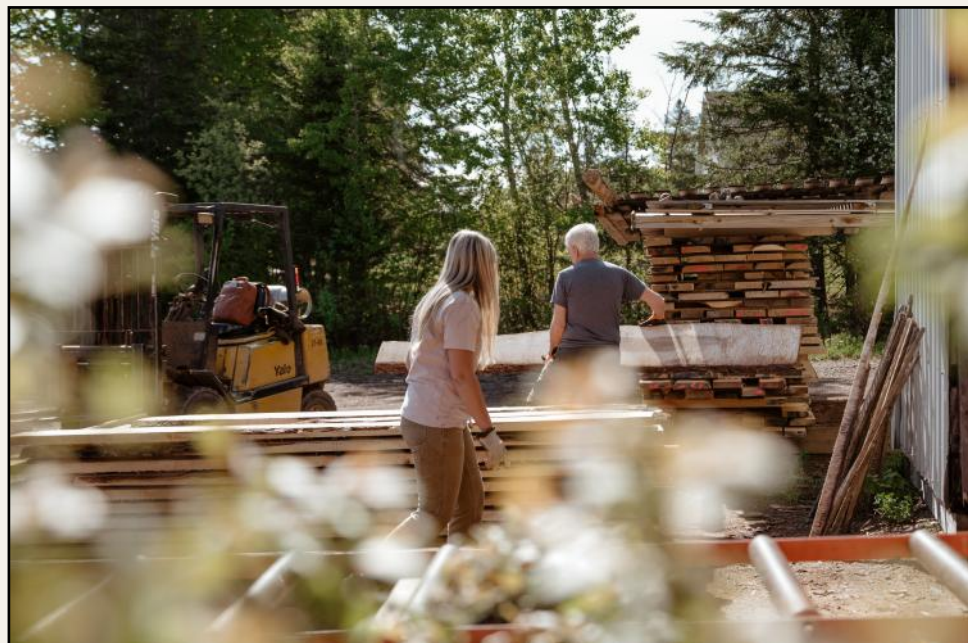
For readers who might be unfamiliar with Root & Grain Co., tell us where you're located, what you do, and who your customers are.

Root & Grain Co. is based in Belledune, New Brunswick. We specialize in sourcing, milling, drying, and grading highly figured hardwoods, primarily Birdseye Maple and Curly Maple. Our customers range from independent craftspeople and luthiers to established builders and manufacturers, as well as anyone who has an appreciation for the rare and beautiful wood New Brunswick is known for. Whether they're building world-class instruments, custom pieces, or simply collecting exceptional material, our customers care deeply about quality, consistency, and the unique figure that makes each piece special.

What is the origin story of Root & Grain Co.? How did it all start?

The story of Root & Grain Co. really began while I was still attending MCFT. My uncle noticed how passionate I was about forestry and wood, and because he had previously been business partners with Dale, the former owner of DJ Smearer Inc., now known as Root & Grain Co., from around 1996 to 2006, he thought I should meet him. What started as a simple visit to what was probably the coolest shop I had ever seen quickly turned into something much bigger.

The first time I stepped in there I was completely mesmerized by the beauty of the wood. Before that, I had only seen Birdseye Maple and Curly Maple a handful of times in my life, and here was this 4,000 square foot shop filled with some of the most incredible figured wood I had ever seen.



I started visiting more often, eager to learn more each time. Eventually, I asked Dale if he would let me work alongside him. Getting the opportunity to learn from someone with his knowledge and experience honestly felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

As time went on, what began as learning and mentorship turned into something even bigger. I eventually asked Dale if he'd consider selling the business, and that conversation eventually led to my acquisition of the company. Being able to work alongside Dale and learn from him has been invaluable, and his mentorship played a huge role in helping shape the business into what it is today.

What species do you work with, and what products do you produce?

Our main species are Birdseye Maple, Curly Maple, and Curly Birch, though we also work with Cherry, Ash, Tamarack, and other specialty hardwoods. We do a lot of different things: We do guitar neck blanks, fretboards, and

acoustic and electric guitar tops, backs, and sides. We also do pool cue shafts and butt stocks. Some other things like knife scale and pen blanks, blanks for flutes, kitchen and home products like cutting boards, bread boards, and serving pieces, and then specialty lumber for custom woodworking too.

What makes Birdseye Maple and Curly Maple/Birch so desirable?

Figured woods are desirable because they offer a kind of beauty that can't be manufactured. Birdseye Maple has thousands of tiny "eyes" throughout the wood, creating incredible visual depth. Curly Maple and Curly Birch have wave-like *chatoyance* it's called. When light hits them, the figure almost appears to move. In musical instruments especially, these woods are prized because they combine performance and aesthetics. Builders want materials that sound great but also make people stop and stare. Of course, there's the rarity of the wood too. Only a small percentage of trees develop premium figure.



What do you see when you look at a log? What characteristics are you looking for? What makes a log desirable or exceptional enough to become one of your products?

The selection process is incredibly important to what we do. We look for several key characteristics when evaluating logs, including the amount of figure, external clues that may indicate figure within the log, heart size, and overall diameter. We're typically looking for saw-log grade material with 50% or less heart, with what we call "music-grade" figure, so wood that has the quality, consistency, and visual character needed for high-end specialty applications like musical instruments. Ultimately, figure matters most.

What happens between identifying a promising log and the final product? What does the milling process look like for some of your products? What's your setup?

Our milling process is quite different from sawing conventional lumber. Since we're primarily after the sapwood and typically don't utilize the heart, we take our time with each log to maximize figure and yield. The process usually starts by leveling the log as soon as it's on the mill so we can make a straight cut across the top and open up a face. From there, we begin taking slabs at our desired thickness, one at a time, until we reach the heart. Once that side is complete, the log is turned, leveled again, and the same process is repeated on the opposite side. After milling, all slabs are edged and stacked on breeze-dry stickers before going into our vacuum kiln. The vacuum kiln allows us to

JANA DOUCET PHOTOGRAPHY

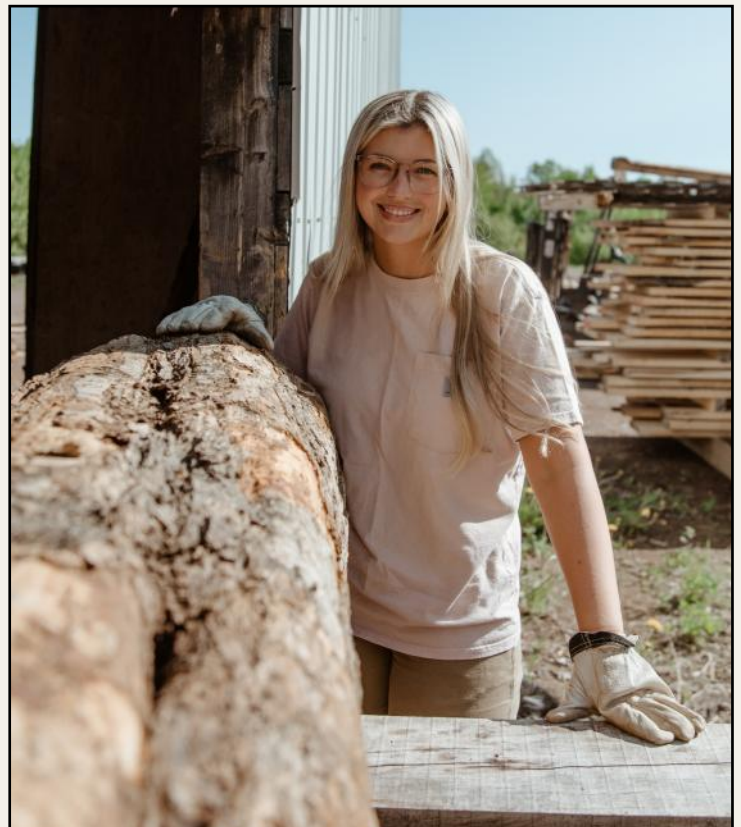
Enjoying these photos? You can see more of Jana Doucet's photography work by visiting her website at janadoucetphotography.com



efficiently reduce moisture content while minimizing stress, warping, and defects. After drying, we often thermally modify the wood as an additional step to improve stability and performance.

How much of your work relies on knowledge, experience, or intuition versus measurable/defined grading standards? How much decision making is involved on your part?

There are definitely measurable grading standards we use; dimensions, moisture content, grain orientation, defect tolerance, and figure quality all matter. But a huge part of the business also relies on knowledge, experience, and intuition. A lot of decision-making comes down to pattern recognition and learning how to read wood. Over time, you start noticing subtle characteristics in logs and boards that aren't written in any grading book. Some of the best decisions come from experience and trusting your eye. I am very lucky to have Dale as a mentor to ask all the important questions when they come up. Dale has allowed me to take part in all decision-making, giving me the opportunity to learn and ask the necessary questions to help make each decision successful.



Have you ever had a log or project that turned out to be especially memorable or meaningful?

Some of the most memorable moments are when a log exceeds all expectations. Dale likes to explain it as opening a present on Christmas morning - you never know exactly what you're going to get. There have been times where we opened up a log not fully knowing what we would find, only to discover some of the most exceptional Birdseye or Curly figure we had ever seen. Those moments never get old. Some of the most exciting moments are when you open up a really beautiful log and know right away that it's something special worth setting aside for a premium application. Other memorable moments are when you can accurately calculate what a log is going to produce, and it ends up generating enough value to pay for a significant portion of your load of wood. Those are the kinds of moments that really stick with you.

Root & Grain makes specialty wood products for niche markets. Have economic changes over of the last few years impacted you?

Yes, like any small business, economic changes affect us. Because specialty wood is often something people choose to spend extra money on, customers can be more careful during uncertain times. That said, people who really value quality still look for high-end materials, so there is still steady demand. It has reinforced the importance of adaptability, diversifying markets, maintaining strong relationships, and continuing to focus on quality.

What do you like most about operating a small business like Root & Grain Co.? What are some of the challenges?

What I love most is building something meaningful, seeing the direct impact of our work, and seeing the beauty in every piece that is made. I enjoy the relationships we build with customers, suppliers, and craftspeople, and knowing that what leaves our shop will become something special—whether that's an instrument, a custom piece, or an heirloom. One of the biggest challenges is wearing so many different hats. Running a small business means balancing operations, sales, marketing, and planning. It can be demanding, but it's also very rewarding.





Looking back at your time at MCFT, what skills, experiences, courses, or lessons do you think benefitted you the most, or were particularly valuable?

MCFT gave me a strong practical understanding of forests, tree identification, wood characteristics, and resource management. But beyond the technical knowledge, it also taught me how to observe, problem-solve, and think critically. A lot of what I do today starts with understanding trees and wood at a deeper level, and MCFT helped build that foundation. The hands-on learning was especially valuable because it made everything feel practical and applicable to real-world work.

What message would you share with current students who are considering their future careers?

Be open to opportunities that don't look exactly like what you originally imagined. When I was at MCFT, I never would have predicted I'd one day be running a specialty wood company serving niche markets around the world. Your career may not follow a straight path—and that's okay. Stay curious, keep learning, and don't underestimate the value of practical skills, hard work, and relationships. Sometimes the best opportunities come from saying yes to something unexpected.

Lastly, and I should have asked before, but what is the significance of the name Root & Grain Company?

No problem! The name Root & Grain represents much more than wood; it reflects life, growth, and the journey that shapes us. The roots of a tree symbolize foundation, hidden strength, and connection to where we come from. They represent the things beneath the surface that ground us - our family, our values, and our beginnings. The grain tells the story of time. Every line, pattern, knot, and figure in a piece of wood represents years of growth, seasons of hardship, and resilience through changing conditions. No two pieces are ever the same, because no two journeys are the same. Together, Root & Grain represents the idea that true beauty and strength are built over time. It's a reminder that what's nurtured beneath the surface eventually shapes what the world sees, and that every piece carries a story, a history, and a legacy of transformation.





WILDFIRE SEASON FOR MFRS AND MCFT ALUMNI

A In mid-July, a wildfire broke out in the nearby area of Oromocto Lake. First detected on July 15th in the area near Tweedside Road in the south-west corner of Oromocto Lake, it grew from an initial 6 hectares to its peak of 17.5 hectares. Secondary spot fires flared up, including a brief fire on Route 3. It was fully contained on July 17th. Here, we see a group photo of wildland firefighters and alumni who responded to this fire alongside members of many local volunteer fire departments.



B Here we see a group of wildland firefighters from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources who were deployed to Labrador in early July to assist in wildfire fighting efforts. They were primarily deployed to the area around Labrador City and the Walsh River area. More than 20 active wildfires were burning across the province at the time of their deployment. The Nova Scotia crew reinforced ground forces and performed direct suppression work.



C Here we see a group of forest rangers from the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development who were deployed to northern Quebec in early July. At the time of deployment, Quebec was experiencing over 180 active fires across the province. New Brunswick volunteers provided critical ground relief to assist the roughly 640 members of Quebec's *Société de protection des forêts contre le feu* (SOPFEU), eventually joined by wildland firefighters from PEI and British Columbia, followed later by crews from Alberta, the USA, and France.



7

FLASHBACK: CONSTRUCTION OF THE HUGH JOHN FLEMMING FORESTRY CENTRE



The MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association recently came into possession of an album of photographs taken during the construction of the Hugh John Flemming Forestry Centre and adjacent NBERD buildings in the mid 1980s. The album also includes some photos of the demolition of some iconic MFRS buildings which took place afterwards. It is our belief that the photos were taken by MFRS instructor Bob Spurway. A selection of these photos, in addition to a collection taken by Joe McCutcheon (MFRS 1986), a member of the last class to utilize the old facilities, are included for your review here. Make sure to check out the entire album of 200+ photos on our website.

Above: Breaking ground just east of the former barn site. L to R - Dr. Murray Neilson (CFS), Hon. Gerald Merrithew (Minister DNR), Hon. Romeo LeBlanc, Premier Richard Hatfield, Dr. Hank W. Blenis (MFRS), Dr. James Downey (President of UNB) – June 25, 1984

FULL GALLERY HERE:

The photographs here are only a small subset of the over 200 photograph album. Be sure to check out the full collection on our website mfrsmcftalumni.org.





Rear of McCormack Building from Wood Yard – March 1984



Clearing and stumping ancillary area – Skidder is Delbert Tibbitts and Porter is Gary Munn



Above: Barn relocated – Mill machinery lean-to
– Summer 1984

Below: Site clearing – Summer 1984 – Looking
easterly.





Above: Webb Building – Fall of 1984 – Note road to the woodlot closed.

Below: Transplanting Red Pine





Field Training Building under construction. The first MFRS building, late fall 1984.



Removal of lumber grading shed, July 1985.

Signing of the master agreement,
Fredericton Inn, August 1985



Jeffrey's Drive – New access road to
UNB Woodlot just west of ancillary



Northern side of academic building – November 14, 1985.



Start of excavation. MFRC. November 14, 1985.



MFRS academic building November 28, 1985.



MFRS academic building. March 21, 1986.





Above: Basement of theatre in the core building January 22nd 1986. Below: Residence #1 looking north, Webb building in background



Core building and MFRS academic building. Heating plant also visible.
Mid April 1986



MFRS. Pouring concrete for reinforced concrete pillars. Old MFRS garage in foreground.



Prince Building, May 1986



McCormack building, May 1986.



Wood tech lab.



Bart Nason and Fred Wilkins
leading the "moving" truck





Wanda Dunphy and Bart Nason packing and moving library material.



Director John Torunski carrying on business as usual despite the move. July 1986.

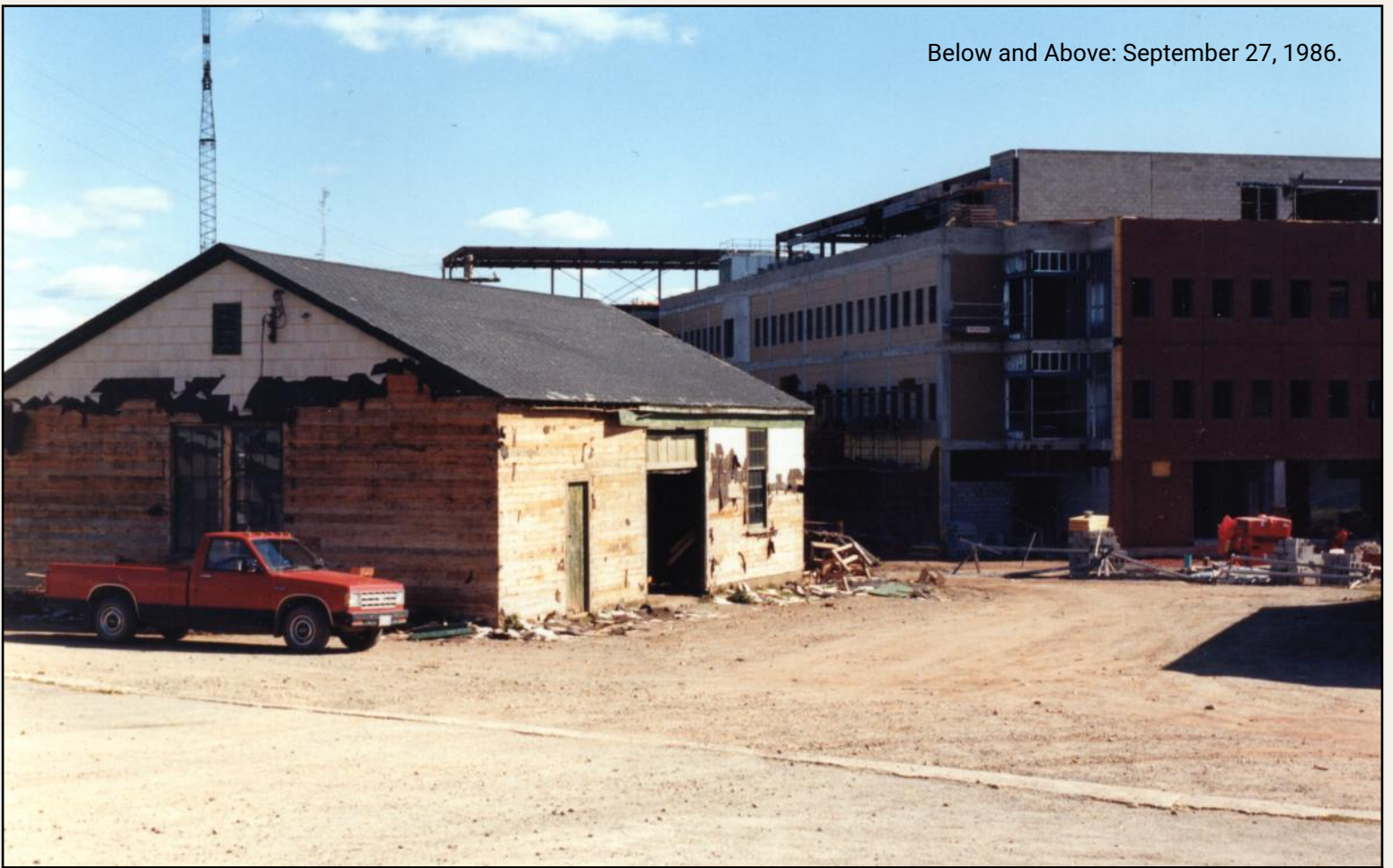


Above: Key Ceremony – August 2nd 1986. Cafeteria of the HJFFC. Dr. Gordon Baskerville, Dean of Forestry at UNB. Chairman of MFRS Board of Governors.

Below: September 27, 1986.



Below and Above: September 27, 1986.



First tree to be planted on the site. 16 October 1986. Left to Right: Daniel Theuri, George Ochien, Nelson Nandili, Bill Brittain, Joh Rotich.



Demolition of Prince Building, in early October 1986.





Above and Below: Demolition of Prince Building, in early October 1986.





Remains of workshop in the foreground, mid-October 1986. Demolition of Prince Building nearly complete.



Webb Building demolished. Late October 1986

April 8th 1987. Glenn Blouin.





April 9th, 1986



THE LAST WINTER IN THE OLD RANGER SCHOOL

PHOTOS BY JOE MCCUTCHEON (MFRS 1986)



Rear view of school from Webb Building.



Front view. Forest Extension offices in the foreground.



The yard behind the school. Webb Residence in the background.



View from Prince Building. Elgee's Norway Spruce in foreground.



Webb Residence. Duplex in background.



McCormack Building. Administration and academic centre.



Prince Building.



Dining hall. Prince Building.



Last class in the auditorium (McCormack Building). Rudy Stoeck instructing.



Joe McCutcheon's room in Webb Building.



Hallway. McCormack Building.



Residence room. Webb Building.



Hallway in McCormack Building. Director's office on the left.



Auditorium.



Hallway. McCormack Building. Sterling McKaskill, Kenny McGinn, Derick Stoddard, Sandy Chisholm. Gaetan Bolduc right background.



"A" Section lab room. North end of McCormack Building.



GRADUATION 2026

THE NEXT WAVE OF FORESTRY PROFESSIONALS



MCFT Fredericton class of 2026. This photo, and all graduation photos, were taken by Joy Cummings, UNB.

**CHECK OUT MCFT ON
FACEBOOK FOR MORE PICS!**



Welcome to the alumni family, classes of 2026. Your graduations marks a truly historic moment in our institution's history, coinciding with our landmark 80 year milestone. For eight decades, this institution has been shaped by the ambition, intellect, and passion of its students, and you have carried that legacy forward with remarkable distinction. As you step out into the world as our newest alumni, you carry 80 years of tradition and community with you.

Bienvenue dans la famille des anciens élèves, promotions 2026. Votre remise des diplômes marque un moment véritablement historique pour notre établissement, coïncidant avec la célébration de notre 80e anniversaire. Depuis huit décennies, notre institution a été façonnée par l'ambition, l'intelligence et la passion de ses étudiants ; vous avez su perpétuer cet héritage avec une distinction remarquable. En vous lançant dans le monde en tant que nouveaux anciens élèves, vous emportez avec vous 80 ans de tradition et d'esprit de communauté.



CTFM Bathurst class of 2026.

FREDERICTON CLASS OF 2026

Keagan James Arsenault
 Ethan Avery
 Gary Lucas Adam Bollong
 Kelsey Bonvie
 Maddox Boucher
 Logan Everett Brewer
 Carolyne Elizabeth Bryant
 Riley Laurie Canning
 Chloe Catherine Irene Carruthers
 Thomas Steven Clement
 Benjamin Donald Davis
 Connor Roderick Deal
 Benjamin Carl DeNuke
 Sarah Olivia Flynn
 Daniel N. Germaine
 Levi Keith Goodwin
 Meredith Gould
 Parker James Grey
 Aidan Joseph Christopher Griffin
 Daniel Adrian Jackman
 Mackenzie Michael Kearns
 Jackson Alexander John Lowe
 Stephen MacDonald
 Dylan Dennis MacIsaac
 Ryley Jack MacKinnon

Madison Anne Claire Mahoney
 Sarah Rebecca McNeil
 Hunter Travis Mercier
 Hunter Owen Newton
 Brody William Nurse
 Matthew David Oldreive
 Taylor Keith Pinette-Godin
 Logan Shane Eric Potter
 Molly Naomi Powell Rideout
 Samuel Ethan Reicker
 Grant Sabastian Rinehart
 William Robert Sherwood
 Maxwell Christopher Smith
 Annie Smith-Maclean
 Tyler Nicholas Stevenson
 Trent Thorne
 Cameron David Underhill
 Grace Elizabeth Veno
 Duncan Victor-Blaauw
 Joshua Stephen Vienneau
 Gregor Scott Wilson

BATHURST CLASS OF 2026

Tristan Agius
 Keesha Bulger
 Jessico Chouinard
 Isabelle DesRosiers
 Audrey Fournier
 Océane Levesque
 Andréanne Parent
 Maxime Parker
 Mayka Perron

Émilie Plourde
 Noémi Roussel
 Olivier Roy



Executive Director Michel LeBlanc delivers his remarks.





Graduates and their family members stand at the commencement of the 2026 graduation ceremony.



Heather Boyd, former Chair of the MCFT Board of Governors, delivers her opening remarks at the 2026 graduation ceremony.



Adrian Pearson, MCFT Instructor and Alumni Association President, delivers a short history of the institution to mark the 80th year milestone.



MCFT Instructor Katelyn Anderson and R.H. Spurway Memorial Award winner Sarita McNeil (right).



MCFT Academic Chair Riley Cote-Demerchant (right) and ESRI GIS Award winner Taylor Pinette.



MCFT Instructor Will Haley and G.C. Elgee Memorial Award Winner Madison Mahoney.



MCFT Instructor Will Haley (left) and WATERAX Award winner Jackson Lowe.



MCFT Instructor Will Haley (left) and Arnold Dunphy Memorial Award winner Matthew Oldreive.



Marwood Ltd. Representatives Suzanne Lavigne and Chase Cernivz with Marwood Ltd. Award winner Joshua Vienneau (centre).



MCFT Instructor and Alumni Association President Adrian Pearson (right) and Alumni Award winner Tyler Stevenson.



MCFT Field Technician Mike Sinclair (left) and Proctor's Award winner (1/2) Benjamin DeNuke.



MCFT Field Technician Mike Sinclair (left) and Proctor's Award winner (2/2) Grace Veno.



MCFT Field Technician Mike Sinclaire (left) and Mercedes Textiles Ltd. Award winner Sarita McNeil.



L to R: MCFT Instructor Jim Ketterling; Forest Operations Award recipients Logan Potter, Dylan MacIsaac, and Sarita McNeil; Instructor Mike Sinclaire.



MCFT Instructor Julie Henderson (left) and Linda Gould McDonald Memorial Award recipient Carolyne Bryant.



Former MCFT Board of Governors Chair Heather Boyd and Governor General's Award recipient Sarita McNeil.



MCFT College Administrator, and NBFTA Treasurer, Chris Fynamore (left) and NBFTA Award winner (tie 1/2) Aidan Griffin.



MCFT College Administrator, and NBFTA Treasurer, Chris Fynamore (left) and NBFTA Award winner (tie 1/2) Taylor Pinette.



NSFTA President Teddy Stalker (right) and NSFTA Scholarship recipient Ben Davis.



Pork Hawkesbury Paper's Teddy Stalker (left) and Port Hawkesbury Paper Bursary recipient Logan Potter.



MCFT College Administrator, and NBFTA Treasurer, Chris Finnamore and NBFTA Scholarship recipient Sarah Flynn.



MCFT Instructor and Tending Award winner Katelyn Anderson and MCFT Class of 2026 award presenter Grant Rinehart.



Guest speaker Matthew James (MCFT 2023), who currently works for JDI, delivers his remarks.



MCFT class of 2026 valedictorian Sarita McNeil delivers her remarks in the K.C. Irving Theatre.

NBFTA Scholarship	Sarah Flynn
NSFTA Scholarship	Benjamin Davis
G. C. Elgee Memorial Scholarship (2)	Madison Mahoney
.....	Sarita McNeil
Port Hawkesbury Paper Bursary	Logan Potter
Jim Steeves Memorial Bursary	Logan Potter
Chic Choc Bursary	Grace Veno
Arnold Dunphy Memorial Award	Matthew Oldreive
Forest Operations Awards (3)	1. Dylan MacIsaac
.....	2. Logan Potter
.....	3. Sarita McNeil
Governor Generals Award	Sarita McNeil
Linda Gould McDonald Award	Carolyne Bryant
R. H. Spurway Memorial Prize	Sarita McNeil
H. W. Blenis Memorial Award	Sarita McNeil
Proctor's Award (2)	Grace Veno
.....	Benjamin DeNuke
Fish & Wildlife Technician Award	Sarita McNeil
Nature Conservancy of Canada Atlantic Region Award	Sarita McNeil
NSFTA Award	Sarita McNeil
NBFTA Award (2).....	Aidan Griffin
.....	Taylor Pinette
R. F. Stoeck Dendrology Award	Sarita McNeil
ESRI GIS Award	Taylor Pinette
Marwood Ltd. Forest Measurements Award.....	Joshua Vienneau

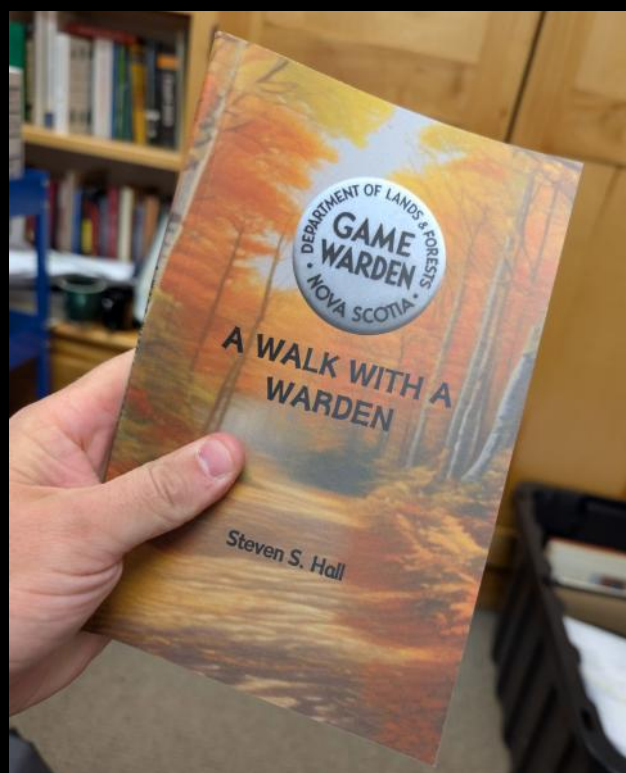
A WALK WITH A WARDEN

Written by Steve S. Hall, MFRS class of 1987:

Description: Follow the path of a Bluenoser born in the early 60's. This true story follows the compass for 37 years as a Game Warden in Nova Scotia, Canada. Transferred from all over the province, many memories were built at each location.

Some of these occurrences needed to be written into the trusty notebook that all wardens carry daily. Often-times, woodsmen confronted in the field would all say the same thing: "I always wanted to do what you do for a living, but life took a different path". Well, I decided to share some of these experiences and adventures as it was an enjoyable and interesting journey. My hope is that at the old hunting or fishing camp, there will be a chuckle or two from reading this book. The job at times was scary, and other times hilarious. When being asked what my favourite part of being a warden is, I can't answer with just one activity. The ever-changing seasons, unpredictable wildlife behaviour, and fantastic, dedicated coworkers are definitely up there.

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON!



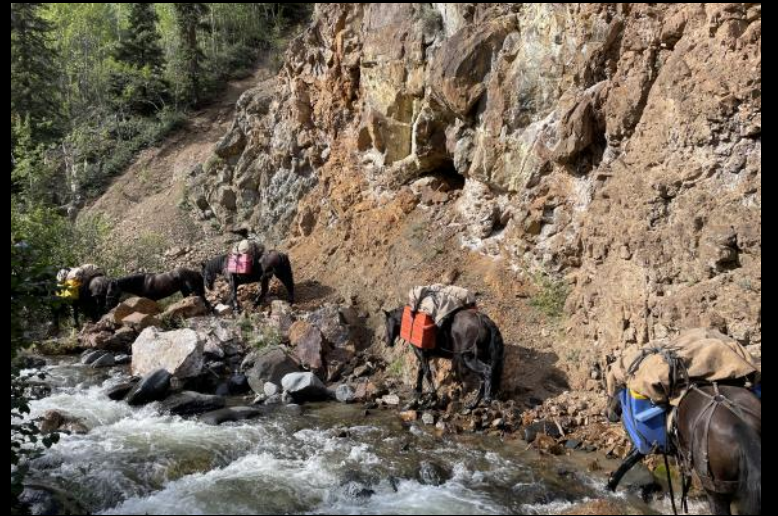
9

ALUMNI IN THE YUKON TERRITORY

My name is **Kolbi Daniels**, and after graduating from MCFT in 2022 I worked as a Forest Technician with Rumcache Forest Solutions Inc. and later decided to pursue a dream of becoming a western big game hunting guide. This was something I had always wanted to do but wasn't sure if it was actually realistic. In 2023, I was hired as a horse wrangler for a small fly-in family run outfit in the Yukon Territory that spent their summers and fall chasing Dall sheep, Yukon-Alaska moose, and grizzly bear. In 2024, I got hired as a wrangler with Shawn Raymond of Yukon Big Game Outfitters. I packed on one sheep hunt and got lucky with an opportunity to guide a backpack mountain grizzly hunt and ran with it. Since then I have been guiding backcountry stone sheep, Yukon-Alaska moose, mountain caribou, grizzly and spring black bear hunts across the eastern part of the Yukon territory for the past three years. All of our hunts are fly-in access by float or bushwheel plane, and then take place on horseback, jetboat, argo, or just backpacking. I head to the high-country for roughly 100 days straight in the fall season and my spring hunts run for 45 days in May and June. The Yukon is beautiful country and definitely worth seeing if you have never been before. Here I just wanted to share a few pictures. I'm usually on the look-out for a good wrangler if some young, eager and physically fit individuals are interested!









IN MEMORIAM:

REMEMBERING MEMBERS OF OUR ALUMNI COMMUNITY



JAMES CLARKE DICK (MFRS 1949)

It is with sadness, love and gratitude for a life well lived that we announce the passing of our amazing father, James Clarke Dick, he peacefully passed away at the remarkable age of 101 on Tuesday, July 14th at the Veterans Health Center in Fredericton. He was born on February 21, 1925 in St. Stephen, New Brunswick.

He began his life on the farm in Moores Mills, New Brunswick surrounded by a loving family learning the values of hard work, responsibility and perseverance. He attended school at the one room school house in the village and graduated from high school in St. Stephen. After high school, Dad enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and spent the next few years proudly serving his country during World War II

as an aircraft mechanic. When the war was over, he enrolled in the Maritime Forest Ranger School and graduated in 1948. He then went on to a career with the Department of Natural Resources from which he retired in 1986.

He married the love of his life, Sally, in 1948. They raised 5 children and made many special memories together. His pride and joy were his children, 10 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. He greatly enjoyed family gatherings over the years where he was surrounded by his family. His incredible memory allowed him to share detailed stories from his past with family and friends up until the end of his life. Dad woke up with a purpose everyday and was a lifelong learner who found joy in life's simple pleasures-tending to his family homestead, cooking, reading, wood working projects and growing a top notch garden. He was blessed with a strong mind and body and remained physically active until his last year when time began to take its toll. He kept up with the changing times throughout his life. He spent time as a child delivering mail by horse and wagon with his father and then many decades later sending emails to his family and friends. Dad was a man of unwavering character, resourcefulness and quiet strength, an inspiration to all who knew him. To have lived 101 years is a wonderful gift, but it is the way he lived those years that will be remembered most.

Dad leaves behind a family who will forever cherish his memory. His 5 children; Bob (Mary), Brian (Donna), David (Maureen), Roger (Mary Leo) and Anne Marie (Pat), his 10 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren, his youngest sister, Marie, as well as, many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his devoted wife Sally, in 2011; his beloved parents, Karl and Doris Dick; and his dear siblings, Eileen, Joyce and Ronald.

York Funeral Home, in Fredericton, has been entrusted with Clarke's final arrangements. A celebration of life will be held from 12pm-2pm on Tuesday, July 21st. Directly following there will be a private graveside service at St. Anthony's Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, remembrances can be made to Greener Village Food Bank or any charity of the donor's choice.

Association Note: *James Clarke Dick, who went by Clarke, was a graduate of the 5th MFRS class in December of 1949. I had the pleasure of interviewing him in April of this year (2026) for the first of our Oral History Project interviews. You can find that interview posted in our Facebook group. It was a great conversation and a great way to kick off that project, and also just a privilege to speak to someone from that era of our institution's history. At the time of the interview, he was one of only two surviving alumni to have graduated before 1950.*



ROBERT GEORGE BROWN (MFRS 1991)

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Robert George Brown on Friday May 1, 2026, in Debert Court Nursing Home at the age of 75 years. He was surrounded by family in the hours leading up to and at the time of his passing with his Toronto Blue Jays game playing in the background. Robert was born on June 11, 1950, in Tenecape, NS, the youngest child of George and Alma Brown.

Robert is survived by his wife of 55 years, Lois (Densmore); son, Jeff (Cynthia); daughters, Tammy (Scott) Beattie, and Jennifer; his pride and joy – grandchildren, Ryan, Colton (Danielle), Annalise, Mallory, and Sierra (and her father, Wayne); great grandchildren, Dawson and Donovan; sisters, Marjorie, Joyce (Phillip) Davidson, and Helen (Harry) Eldridge; and brother, Reggie (Cathy) as well as numerous nieces and nephews, including his special niece, Lori Dawn (Martin) Boutilier.

Robert was predeceased by brothers, Jimmy, Almon, and Arthur; sister, Vera; and infant granddaughter, Olivia.

Over the years, Robert started his working years at Chrysler Canada in Toronto, spent over 30 years with the Department of Lands & Forests (Natural Resources), and after retiring from there drove a school bus for ten years for CCRCE.

Robert also took a sabbatical in 1990/91 to attend and graduated from Maritime Forest Ranger School in Fredericton.

Robert was also a past member of the Masonic Foundation of NS, and past master of the WD Lawrence Masonic Lodge. In his younger years, he was a softball coach and a 4H leader.



DEREK ALAN GILBY (MFRS 1994)

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Derek Alan Gilby on May 31, 2026, at the age of 56. Born in Halifax on January 21, 1970, Derek was the beloved son of Bruce Gilby of Elmsdale and the late Cheryl Hilton.

Affectionately known as "Deke" to his family, friends, and colleagues, he was a man whose quiet strength, kind heart, and unwavering devotion to those he loved left a lasting impact on everyone fortunate to know him.

A lifelong learner and dedicated public servant, Deke was a graduate of CDI College of Business and Technology, earned an Advanced Geographic Information Systems Diploma from the Centre of Geographic Sciences (COGS), and was a graduate of the Maritime Forest Ranger School. Throughout his distinguished career, he gained extensive experience in forest protection, wildfire management, and forest health—work that he was immensely proud of. At the time of his passing, Derek proudly served as the Provincial Wildfire Duty Officer with the Forest Protection Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. His dedication to protecting Nova Scotia's forests and natural resources was a source of immense pride and purpose. On more than one occasion, Derek led Nova Scotia wildfire crews across Canada to assist other provinces during significant wildfire events, exemplifying his leadership, expertise, and unwavering commitment to public service. He was deeply proud of this work and of the opportunity to serve communities beyond Nova Scotia in their time of need.

Outside of work, Derek found joy in life's simple pleasures. He loved fishing, spending time in nature, listening to classic rock music, and, in recent years, cultivating a strong passion for

IN MEMORIAM



gardening and astronomy. Whether tending to his garden, enjoying the outdoors, or sharing stories with family and friends, Derek appreciated the beauty found in everyday moments.

Deke believed in showing up for his community just as he did for his family and friends. Whether volunteering in the "dish pit" at community turkey dinners or helping wherever he was needed, he never sought recognition, finding fulfillment simply in giving back. Through his kindness, humility, and selflessness, he touched many lives. Derek will be remembered for his gentle spirit, loyalty, sense of humour, and the countless ways he supported those around him. His legacy lives on in the forests he helped protect, the family and friends he cherished, and the many people whose lives were enriched by his quiet strength and generosity.

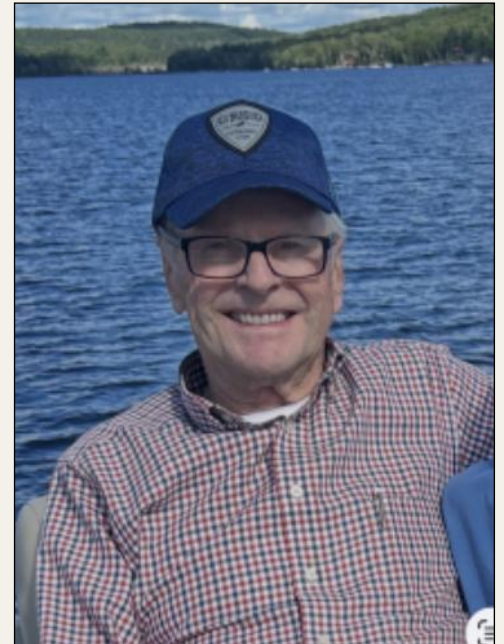
Above all else, Derek was devoted to his family. His nieces—Breanna, Megan, and Averie—were the light of his life. Affectionately known as "Uncle Deke," he never missed an opportunity to cheer them on, celebrate their achievements, attend their events, or simply spend time with them. His love for them was unconditional and evident in everything he did.

One of the greatest blessings of Derek's life was meeting Sheri. Together, they shared a love that was deep, genuine, and inspiring to witness. Sheri brought out the very best in Derek every day, and the life they built together was filled with laughter, companionship, and unwavering devotion. Their love was a gift to all who had the privilege of watching their story unfold.

Deke was also a proud Big Brother to Riley Hart, a role he treasured and a relationship he cherished deeply.

Derek is survived by his father, Bruce Gilby; his partner, soulmate, and the love of his life, Sheri Martin; his sister, Jan Gilby (Jeff Theriault); his cherished niece, Averie; his sister-in-law, Suzanne; and his beloved nieces, Breanna and Megan. He is also lovingly remembered by Sheri's parents, Nora and Francis Martin, with whom he shared a special bond; and many loving aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and colleagues who will deeply miss his presence and friendship.

Derek was predeceased by his mother, Cheryl Hilton, and his brother, Ritchie Gilby, who was not only his brother but also his best friend. The bond they shared was one of unwavering love, loyalty, and friendship.



DONALD D. NICHOLSON (MFRS 1963)

Donald Douglas Nicholson passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family in Rockland, on Sunday, April 27, 2026. He was born on July 12, 1937 and was the son of the late Donald and Juanita Nicholson.

Donald is survived by his wife, Judith Nicholson of Rockland; children, Leslie Melvin (Bill) of Charleston, Ian Nicholson (Shelley) of Somerville, Sophie Albright (Matthew) of St. Thomas; grandchildren, Isaac Nicholson (Emma), Elijah Nicholson (Kristine), Anders Albright, Elsa Albright; step grandchildren, Josh Melvin (Maria), Katelyn Melvin; step great grandchildren, Addison, Kaiden, Rylan, Maddox and Hayden; sister, Barbara Layte (Roy); cousins, and many nieces and nephews.

During his youth, "Donnie" was an athlete, playing competitive basketball, hockey, and baseball. In 1955, the varsity boys basketball team won the first banner for Hartland High School. As an

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

The MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association actively tracks the passing of alumni in our database. Submit information or formal notices to alumniinfo@mcft.ca

BROWSE RECORDS BY DECADE HERE:



IN MEMORIAM



Allstar, Donnie went onto play for Team NB, then after winning Atlantics, they moved on to compete in Montreal.

Donnie also enjoyed swimming, hunting, and especially fishing. At just seven years old, he was the youngest fisherman ever to have landed a salmon at the once famous Hartland Pool. Other endeavours throughout the years included curling, skiing, and golfing. Donnie also enjoyed travelling with his family, especially to the beautiful Caribbean island of Barbados.

Donnie was a graduate of The Maritime Forest Ranger School in 1963. He worked for the New Brunswick Power Commission as a surveyor prior to purchasing Midway Motors in Hartland from Malcolm Tracy in 1966. After selling Midway Motors in 1983, he took a hiatus from the auto industry to pursue other endeavours. By 1986, he was building a new car dealership. In 1987, he opened Connell Chrysler in Woodstock, and worked there until his retirement.

Donnie had a lifelong appreciation of woods and waters. He spent his spare time fishing, canoeing, and hiking hardwood ridges with a compass. He mourned the loss of habitat due to clearcutting in his beloved South Branch - the Becaguimac and Nashwaak watersheds.

As a community-minded person, Donnie, with his friends, strived to make the local area more active. Donnie worked as project manager for the Courtyard Plaza, project manager of Project Swim (Hartland town pool), and helped with the fundraising and

establishment of the Covered Bridge Golf and Country Club.

Donnie will be remembered for his attention to detail, cheery disposition, and congeniality towards others. He was a true gentleman. Always a perfectionist, with his attention to planning and detail, he could be counted on to get things right. Donnie will be missed by everyone who knew him.

"We'll see you later, kiddo."



HUBERT ACBAR HARTLEY (MFRS 1964)

Hubert "Bud" Acbar Hartley, 83, passed away on March 23, 2026, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Born on March 25, 1942, in Bath, New Brunswick, Bud was the son of the late Hubert Hartley and Madelaine Brown. He was lovingly raised by Ed and Louise Estabrooks, who also predeceased him.

Bud was a hardworking and entrepreneurial man who owned and operated a landscaping company and pursued several business ventures throughout his life. He took great pride in his work and in the relationships he built.

A lifelong sports enthusiast, Bud spent many years playing basketball with the "Hermites," forming friendships and memories that lasted a lifetime. He was also an avid golfer and enjoyed a wide range of sports. Whether on the court, the course, or around a table, Bud was known for his competitive spirit—especially when it came to pool, darts, cards, dominoes, and friendly games of any kind.

Bud had a natural gift for connecting with people. He could walk into a room full of strangers, strike up a conversation, and leave with new friends. His outgoing nature and love of socializing gave him a wide circle of friends, and he truly valued time spent with family and others. In later years, he especially enjoyed his winters in Florida. He shared a loving marriage of over 60 years with his wife, Linda Hartley, whom he married in 1964.

He is survived by his wife, Linda; his siblings, Harvey, Carolyn, Sybil, Shona, and Sheila; and his children, Joanna (Lawrence), Joel (Denise), and Kyle (Tara and her children Ryan and Kristine). He was a proud grandfather to Samantha, Maddie (Tanner), Hannah (Brady), K. Leigh, Mason, Michael, Alexandra, Rachel, and Dominic, and a great-grandfather to Cory, Oakley, Sophia, and Griffin.

Bud will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him.





DAVE MCDONALD

REMEMBERING A FRIEND, MENTOR, AND EDUCATOR



David Iain McDonald painting on the porch of his Aberdeen Street home in Fredericton.

David Iain McDonald was born in Cornwall, Ontario. He spent his career in forestry, working across Canada and the northeastern United States, before joining MCFT as an instructor in 2003. Dave's teaching career at MCFT spanned 10 years, from 2003 to 2013, with another brief stint during the 2016-2017 academic year. An intelligent, passionate, wise, and caring instructor, Dave's teaching helped to shape the personal and professional journeys of many students throughout his career. Off-campus, Dave was also a deeply committed and passionate artist, often painting from the porch of his Aberdeen Street home in Fredericton. With his passing on June 17th, 2026 we pay tribute to Dave, the educator, individual, artist, and cherished member of the MCFT community.



It is with deep respect and personal sadness that I undertake writing this brief tribute to mark the passing of David Iain McDonald, former faculty member, colleague, and mentor, who left an indelible mark on all of us that knew him. For those that were unaware, Dave suffered

a stroke in June and passed away shortly thereafter, peacefully, in hospital on his 70th birthday.

For 10 years, Dave served as an instructor at MCFT and helped shape much of the early evolution of the institution



from the legacy of MFRS. Whether you loved his classes, hated them, maybe even cursed his name after them occasionally, I guarantee you remember the experience. Those of us that survived countless hours wading through the complexities of “Daveology” (for those that didn’t experience it firsthand, it was a combination of Advanced Silviculture, Forest Business, and Wood Technology) or suffered through the very intentionally convoluted, mind-warping, largely unsolvable intricacies of the annual “Devil Assignment,” will know Dave was a bit old school, believing hard experiences produced stronger minds and better human beings. I would often half-jokingly call him an academic sadist. In response, he would simply grin. One of the greatest days of his teaching career was when he was gifted a set of devil horns after the first Devil Assignment. They became a treasured possession. But he was a devil with no malice. His devilish classroom persona aside, Dave was a dedicated educator, passionate forestry professional, and simply one of the kindest human beings it was ever my privilege to know. Believe it or not, all of the things he put us through in the classroom and field were his way of encouraging us to think critically, push our boundaries, and discover our own potential. I will always remember one thing in particular he told me when I was a student: *“If you got into forestry to make a fortune, you won’t; BUT, you will see things that very few others get to see, and get paid for it.”* The first time I sat in awe looking at the sunrise over the Rockies from a helicopter, I thought *“Dave was right...”*.

For many of us, his influence extended far beyond the classroom. Having had the privilege of being one of his former students, becoming his friend, and now teaching at the college myself (I even inherited his old office), I experienced firsthand his generosity as both a teacher and a friend. We saw each other through some very bad times and some very good times, and he even stood up with me on my wedding day as friend, best man, and in the place of a father I never really had. Even after his retirement, I like to think his standard of excellence, kindness, and dedication continue to influence those of us who were his students and are now his successors. It was Dave that first inspired my desire to be an educator, partly for that very reason, as he made me see that, if any of our students use or pass on even one thing we’ve taught them, it’s our little version of immortality. We may all be forgotten eventually, but the knowledge we instill will live on.

David was predeceased by his parents and by the first great love of his life, Linda. He is survived by the second great love of his life, Joyce, with whom he knew the happiest years of his life, as well as an extended community of alumni, colleagues, and friends whose lives were enriched by knowing him. David being David, however, he left wishes that there not be any formal memorial or funeral. While I am probably not the only one disappointed that the old bugger is not giving us the formal opportunity to come together and remember him, pay our respects to him, and perhaps even toast to him, those of us that did get to know him more deeply are probably not surprised, and will understand his wishes. Besides, there’s nothing keeping us from doing it informally anyway whenever any of us come together. In the future, David’s dear friend, renowned Canadian author and former senator David Adams Richards will also be organizing a memorial showing of David’s art.

David lived a rich and fulfilling life with his fair share of adventure and variety, and though his death would always be too soon, he was happy and loved right up to his last moment. Ultimately, I believe that knowing any of his knowledge, passion, and personality live on in the memories and professional actions of those he influenced, directly or indirectly, or just knowing that some of us cherish even the simple times sitting with him talking on his porch over a glass of wine or a beer, will make him happy, wherever he may be.

I’ll miss you Dave.

- Doug Hiltz

David was a grand and exceptional friend to me; a quiet, unassuming and dignified presence in my life. A person I cherished as a caring and wise confidant who lived across the street, waved as I drove by and welcomed me whenever I came unto his porch, no matter what time of day.

We spoke often these last few years and as we spoke, I realized I was in the company of someone grand, someone who truly realized that there was no greatness without goodness, kindness and simplicity, and that he offered these things in abundance to all who passed by his door. Self-effacing, welcoming and shy, he was a brilliant artist and a compassionate and consequential man. I don't think he once touted himself in any fashion but was always willing to display affection and admiration for others. He was above all, a dignified and spiritual human being, and I will miss him as much as anyone I knew"

- David Adams Richards, June 2026. Excerpt from Dave's obituary.

Dave definitely hit his stride as an instructor at MCFT. He was a very personable man who captivated his students and was easy to speak to and learn from. Condolences to his family and everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. —Tim Murray, class of 2005

Always good discussion in class, but better conversations on the porch or backyard. He made a hell of an impact on my career and life. He will be missed dearly. —Josh Cornell, class of 2009

Dave's Devil assignment will always be one of my favourite MCFT projects, as much as it sucked! - Anthony Koughan, class of 2011

I am absolutely heartbroken. He was an amazing instructor, mentor, and friend. I never would have made it without his continued support. —Kerry Caverhill, class of 2003

My condolences to Dave's Family, he greatly impacted many young forestry professionals, truly one of kind. —Justin Barrett, class of 2007

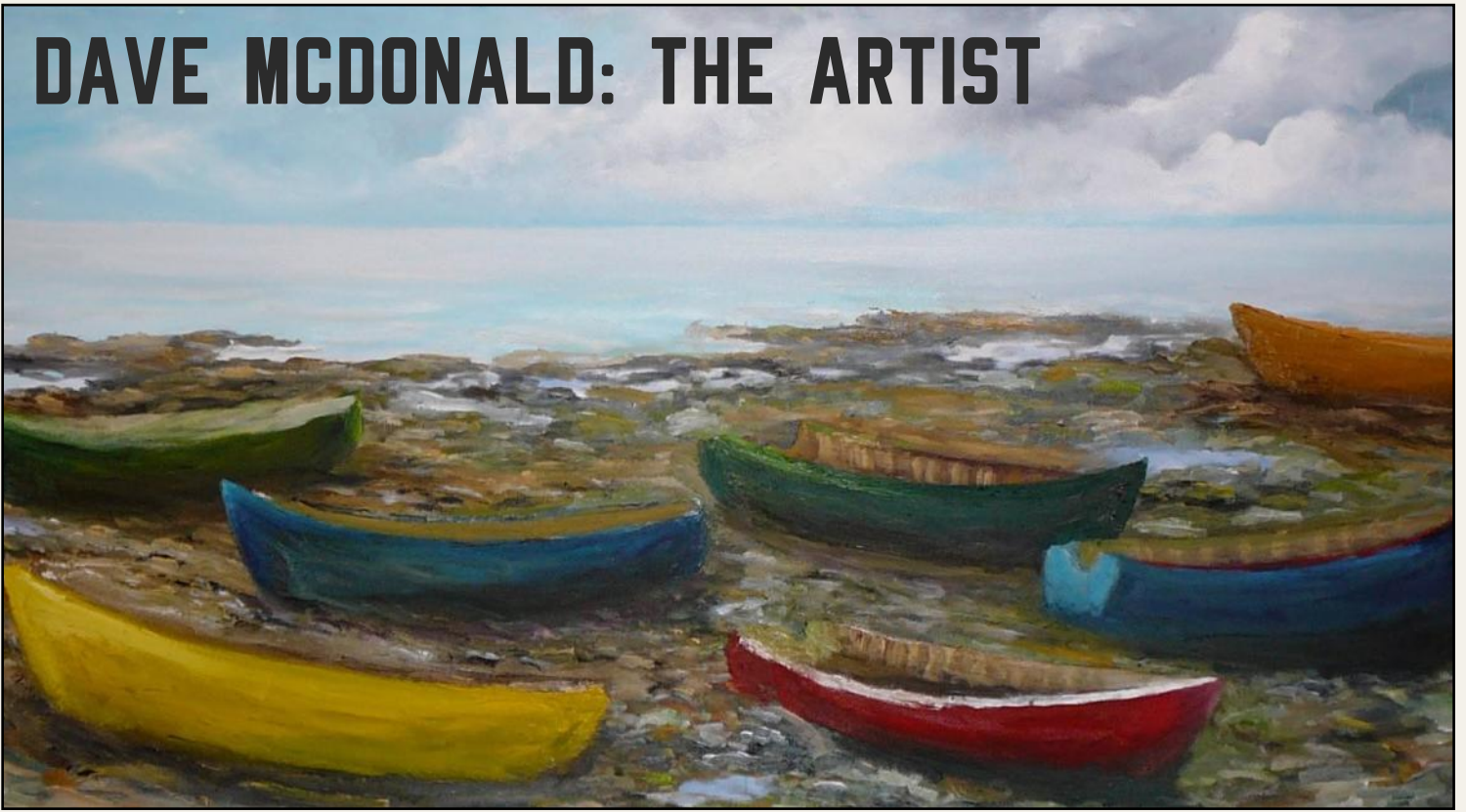
I absolutely loved Dave's classes. He was quirky, intelligent and passionate. He was a great instructor. —Jenna Hughes-Games, class of 2007

I remember very little from graduation day, but I remember an impactful conversation I had with him. He showed a side that was sensitive, raw and inspiring. I will never forget. David as an inspirational artist among so many other accomplishments. Rest easy friend. - Melanie MacAdam, class of 2006

Dave was special to me for so many reasons. When I started teaching at MCFT my first course was one of Dave's. I found out on a Friday I would be teaching Monday at 8am. He told me don't worry, I'll give you my binder with lessons and notes, and handed me this big white binder. When I got home I opened it feeling some relief. As I started to read the pages, it was all his stories he would tell in class, and all his little quotes. There wasn't a lick about bugs! So all those times in class when Dave was out on a limb telling a tale, it was all planned. Every story. Oh and for anyone that ever had THE STUMP question in botany, I know the answer ... —Sarah McCoy, class of 2012



DAVE MCDONALD: THE ARTIST



Many people also knew Dave as a passionate artist and painter, often painting from the front porch of his Aberdeen Street home in Fredericton. Dave's paintings reflected not only the beauty of the Maritime landscape but also the quiet thoughtfulness with which he viewed the world. As a self-taught artist working primarily in oils, he was best known for evocative landscapes and seascapes inspired by the forests, shorelines, and coastal communities he loved, with those of Gran Manan holding a particularly special place in his heart. Rather than painting from photographs or existing scenes, Dave allowed each work to emerge from his imagination, often beginning a canvas without knowing exactly where it would lead, and trusting the creative process to reveal the final product.



Over the years, Dave's paintings became a familiar sight at exhibitions throughout New Brunswick. He was a regular participant in the Capital Art Sales in Fredericton, where he exhibited dozens of original works and looked forward as much to meeting fellow artists and visitors as to displaying his paintings. He also enjoyed a long association with the Grand Manan Art Gallery, presenting several solo exhibitions there, and exhibited at Sunbury Shores Arts & Nature Centre in Saint Andrews. Grand Manan, in particular, held a special place in his heart. He described the island as "*a second home*" and a place that offered refuge, inspiration, and a welcoming artistic community.





Dave approached painting with remarkable curiosity, creativity, and humility. Although he enjoyed success as an exhibiting artist, he never believed that learning was complete. Even after decades of painting, he remained a student. He continued to seek opportunities to study with other artists and refine his understanding of colour, light, composition, and technique. He was equally willing to experiment and challenge himself, producing innovative interchangeable diptychs, triptychs, and multi-panel works that could be rearranged into different yet complete compositions, and many technically difficult seascapes. It was not uncommon for Dave to have 12 to 15 large-canvas paintings in progress at one time, developing gradually over weeks and months.

Perhaps most distinctive was the way he paired many of his paintings with original poems and verses. For Dave, words and images belonged together, each enriching the other and inviting viewers to connect not only with the scene before them but also with the memories and emotions it evoked. He often remarked that he was less interested in commercial success than in creating work that genuinely touched people. In one reflection after an exhibition, he wrote that while he might never achieve great commercial success, and did not seek it, he believed he had succeeded where it mattered most: in creating paintings that resonated with others.



That philosophy is reflected throughout the body of work he leaves behind. The emotions that characterized him as an individual and an artist were always evident in his work: humility, gratefulness, gentleness, reflectiveness, curiosity, and generosity. Through his work, Dave leaves a lasting artistic legacy, one that continues to celebrate the landscapes, communities, and shared humanity that inspired him throughout his life.

- Adrian Pearson



VIEW MORE:

View a more complete collection of artwork by Dave McDonald on his Facebook page:







A CALL TO ACTION: HOW YOU CAN HELP THE MFRS/MCFT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



The MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association Board is a small, volunteer-led working board dedicated to preserving our shared history, strengthening connections among alumni, and supporting the next generation of forestry professionals. Like many volunteer organizations, we rely on the time, skills, and enthusiasm of our members to keep our initiatives moving forward. We are always looking for alumni who are interested in becoming involved, whether by serving on the Board or by lending a hand with individual projects.

Not everyone has the time to serve as a board member, and that's fine. There are many other ways you can make a meaningful contribution regardless, including:

- Subscribing to our email distribution list to stay updated and broaden our communication network.
- Sharing old photographs, documents, memorabilia, or stories from your time at the College.
- Helping to fill information gaps by identifying people, places, dates, events, and facts when they arise as we work on various alumni projects.
- Notifying us of any achievements, milestones, awards, promotions, retirements, or obituaries, and forwarding social media links or other relevant alumni news to us for inclusion in newsletters or social media.
- Providing information and updates on the status of known alumni to help keep our alumni database up-to-date.
- Recommend individuals who we can talk to for newsletter stories, oral history interviews, and other projects.
- Promote the associations by encouraging alumni friends and family to visit our website, join our social media pages, subscribe to our newsletter, and reach out if they have any questions.
- Offer your skills and expertise.
- Engage with our social media accounts and posts.
- Provide feedback on how we're doing.

If you are interested in taking on a larger role, we also welcome inquiries from alumni interested in volunteering on the Board. We are presently looking to fill the following positions:

- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Digital Media Coordinator
- MFRS/MCFT/CTFM Alumni Representative(s)

Please contact us by email at alumniinfo@mcft.ca or by phone at **506 999 5399** if you have interest in volunteering with the MFRS/MCFT Alumni Association Board. We would love to hear from you.