Hello, Bonjour, and Pjila’si,

This Annual Sustainability Report tells the story of how NSCC is improving its relationship with the land, and the people with whom we share it.

We do land acknowledgements to show our respect for the land, to recognize the important ties between place and identity, and to honour connections to ancestral lands. This is a tradition that dates back centuries for Indigenous people. For non-Indigenous Canadians, land acknowledgements are an opportunity to reflect on the impacts of colonialism, to be accountable to and to honour Indigenous people – of whose land we are situated on – to thank those who still live on and care for the land, and an important and vital piece of reconciliAction. It is an invitation to reflect on how we, as individuals, institutions, and communities, can engage in reconciliation more meaningfully.

This is especially true in 2021 as we as a nation grapple with the legacies of the Canadian Residential School system and the lasting intergenerational trauma it has caused. We remember all of the Indigenous children whose lives were forever lost and those whose lives were forever changed because of it, including the approximate 1,100 Mi’kmaq and Wolastoqiyik children who attended the Shubenacadie Indian Residential school between 1930 and 1967. We stand in solidarity with survivors and families. We promise to use this moment to listen with open hearts to the stories so that we can understand, learn, and act as a College community.

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 Sacred 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.

In the Mi’kmaq language, the word ‘Netukumlimk’ means the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and well-being of the individual and the community without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of the environment. The Netukumlimk principle is related closely to the indivisible and interconnected nature of the universal set of Sustainable Development Goals – People, Prosperity, Planet, Partnership, and Peace. Through these concepts, we recognize the holistic and interdependent relationships between the lands, skies, lakes, rivers, shores, and seas of Mi’kma’ki, and all who call it habitat and home.

Our choices are not our own: these concepts remind us of our collective responsibility to live for each other with gratitude in the present while honouring our futures. This fundamental responsibility not only applies to environmental ethics, but to all choices that affect the culture and wellbeing of our descendants. It is our sincere hope that NSCC’s efforts can contribute to a future for our institution and our communities that embraces these sacred duties.
This year, the world has continued to endure the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With it, uncomfortable uncertainties have been brought to light, and also a few vitally important truths. Firstly, the disruption that the pandemic created has accelerated the arrival of the future. We have shown that when we work together and care about an issue, we are capable of quickly transforming the way we live. Secondly, it has become abundantly clear that our short-term, public policy lens needs to become more inclusive and focused on long term sustainability and resilience. This will be critical for the quality of life of current and future generations in our communities.

To achieve and maintain intergenerational equity in Nova Scotia and beyond, we need to find an appropriate balance between economy, environment and equity and we need to do this wholistically and systematically. Not only that, but to quote Greta Thunberg: “We need to act like our houses are on fire” because we are running out of time. To efficiently tackle these issues collectively by 2030, the United Nations have developed a global framework consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nova Scotia Community College is one of 212 universities and colleges that have signed the SDG accord. In signing this, learning institutions across the world are making a commitment to one another to do more to deliver the goals, and to regularly report on progress. The College’s annual sustainability report presented here is part of this important process.

Learning and applied research institutions can significantly contribute to reaching SDGs and can act as facilitators for necessary changes in our respective communities. Building knowledge and skills in the next generation of workers, as well as providing innovative green technology solutions through applied research are important tools. Success is more likely if we are willing to bring two or more perspectives into problem solving. Mi’kmaq Elder Albert Marshall invented the phrase “Two-Eyed Seeing”. He describes this as “learn to see from your one eye with the best or the strengths in the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing... and learn to see from your other eye with the best of the strengths in the mainstream (Western or Eurocentric) knowledges and ways of knowing... but most importantly, learn to see with both these eyes together, for the benefit of all”.

Real change will only be possible if we all work together regardless of background or age and embrace the gifts of diversity. As a College community, we can direct the momentum of change that this devastating pandemic has created towards action on securing intergenerational equity in our communities.

Don Bureaux,
NSCC President
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Welcome to NSCC’s 2020/21 Annual Sustainability Report

This report was prepared by our NSCC Facilities and Engineering Department, and outlines our progress in advancing sustainable development within the organization. It shares our approach to reaching both internal and global sustainability goals in several areas of greatest importance to our organization. Reporting on progress towards these goals is one of the ways we hold ourselves accountable to the communities we serve.

Some exciting sustainable infrastructure developments this year includes the Information Technology Innovation Centre at the IT Campus, the new Residence and Business Research Centre located at Annapolis Valley Campus (COGS), and the new Residence at Strait Area Campus. These buildings have been designed for energy efficiency and will allow for learning and research. All new buildings are currently undergoing the LEED certification process.

In acknowledgement of the important sustainability work that we have accomplished this past year, I am very pleased to say that we have received recognition through several awards. For example, Nova Scotia Community College received the “Gold Excellence in Sustainable Development Award” by Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan). We also continue to hold the position of “Top Performing Associate College” in AASHE’s annual Sustainable Campus Index (SCI).

With that said, at NSCC we do not just measure success in terms of awards achieved, but in the necessity of continual improvement to do better and widen the reach of our impact and organizational responsibility.

Monica Foster
VP, College Services & CFO
The 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) support the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. NSCC’s strategic vision has been aligned closely with these goals. As an industry leader in sustainability and promoting sustainability literacy in Nova Scotia, NSCC will promote sustainability literacy and remain accountable by reporting on our annual sustainability performance.

In January 2021, NSCC became one of the first institutions in Canada to sign the SDG Accord (sdgaccord.org), the international university and college sector’s collective response to the United Nations 17 SDGs. Signing the SDG Accord reinforces the College’s commitment to sustainable development initiatives and will strengthen our connection with Nova Scotia’s communities and labour markets. NSCC will lead other Canadian post-secondary institutions on our sustainability journey and forge strong, diverse partnerships to support the advancement of these goals – both locally and nationally. We have updated our Sustainability Policy to recognize that we have a responsibility and transformational role in attaining the SDGs by 2030.

NSCC has engaged with the province to help develop the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act (EGCCRA). The Act sets ambitious goals to fight climate change and will continue to advance Nova Scotia’s economic, social, and environmental well-being.

The NSCC SDG Action Plan outlines all of our actions supporting the SDGs and has been developed through consultation with senior leaders across the College. The full SDG Action Plan is available as Appendix A of this report.
The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)’s Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ (STARS) offers a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. Participation in STARS involves collecting information about sustainability initiatives and performance and documenting that information in the online reporting tool for review by AASHE staff. STARS measures how sustainability is embedded in all aspects of an institution, including categories for Academics, Engagement, Operations, and Planning and Administration. AASHE has tied each one of these categories to the 17 SDGs, to help institutions understand how their performance in STARS relates to their global impact. There are five levels of recognition: Reporter, Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. NSCC has maintained a STARS Gold rating since 2013.

Each year AASHE releases a Sustainable Campus Index (SCI). This is a publication that recognizes top-performing colleges and universities in 17 sustainability impact areas, as measured by STARS. In the 2020 SCI NSCC was recognized, for the fourth year in a row, as the top overall performing associate college. NSCC has also consistently been ranked as a top five performer for the impact areas of sustainability in waste and sustainability in buildings over the last four years.

**Goal**

- NSCC’s new target is to achieve a STARS Platinum Rating by 2026.
NSCC’s Marconi Campus is moving from Grand Lake Road to the Sydney Waterfront. The 305,000 sq. ft. facility will provide more amenities that will allow the College to explore new or improved programming for students. It will also increase opportunities for students to interact and collaborate amongst themselves and the broader community. This project will have a significant impact on the economic viability and revitalization of the downtown core of Sydney.
Campus culture is the personality of an institution: its actions and values. Our vision is one of NSCC as a dynamic community – an ecosystem – of equity-minded individuals and groups where opportunities to connect and align can easily occur. This model is based on two culturally-informed perspectives of knowing, being, and doing:

- The Afrocentric principle of Ubuntu, often translated as ‘I am because we are’. Ubuntu is the belief that we are intrinsically connected through our relationships and our common ties to the past, present, and future.
- The Mi’kmaq concept of Netukulimk (pronounced ‘NE-DO-GU-LEM’). Netukulimk encourages productive interdependence through the responsible stewardship of resources to ensure ongoing sustainability.

So what does this mean for NSCC? For you? We treat our culture as a body of living knowledge with promising practices and standards. We develop and maintain pathways for information sharing, clarifying institutional equity priorities, and model inclusive leadership. By placing empathy, compassion, and humility at the centre of all our actions, we can foster deliberate connection and positively impact collective and individual quality of life in Nova Scotian communities. Through thoughtfulness and mindfulness, allyship and collaboration, we are committed to cultivating spaces where all feel a sense of belonging.

For some examples of specific actions the College is taking to promote sustainability in our culture and communities, we invite you to explore our comprehensive SDG Action Plan (Appendix A).

Recap 2020

- Updated NSCC Sustainability Policy to include reference to the 17 SDGs and the broader definition of sustainable development.

Goals

- Cultivate a learning environment that is equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible for all students and employees, prioritizing individual and collective health and well-being.
- Provide learning experiences and personal development that will contribute to economic and social sustainability throughout learners’ lives, at all stages of their careers.
- Develop measurable sustainable objectives within existing business plans and frameworks.
- Continue to develop valued relationships and partnerships with communities, industries, and institutions throughout the province for a more meaningful education for our students and positive impacts for our neighbours.
Equity Ecosystem

The Equity Ecosystem is a framework for the college that recognizes the strength, diversity, and resilience of dynamic ecological systems, and applies this thinking to the campus’s human systems. It reflects two interdependent dimensions:

- **Equity Architecture (Structural Dimension).** This component builds the structures needed at the College for changing ways of thinking and acting,
- **Equity Mindedness (Cultural Dimension).** This component is responsive to the structural dimension by building the knowledge, skills, and behaviors requisite to change ways of thinking, acting, and being to ensure that equity-centered practices are a pervasive feature throughout the college community.

By thoughtfully building our Equity Architecture and intentionally fostering Equity Mindedness, we will establish learning and working spaces that celebrate and amplify difference. This shows up at the **macro level** in strategic College-wide equity and inclusion priorities; at the **meso level** where specific priorities are actioned and mobilized; and at the **micro level** where equity mindedness is embedded into each individual’s work.

The ecosystem is coming to life in many ways, beginning with a focus on existing College resources and structures. From there it will grow and evolve through additional elements over the next couple of years. We will examine formal systems, processes and roles to analyze data and develop strategies to address institutional inequities. Those results will help us continue to identify and fill gaps to ensure the ecosystem continues to flourish.
Academics and Applied Research

Education can shape values that are supportive of sustainable development, and in the process strengthen sustainable societies. By training and educating the future workforce, higher education institutions are uniquely positioned to prepare students to understand and address sustainability issues. As economic and social catalysts in the communities they serve, NSCC campuses provide people with the skills they need to succeed.

NSCC conducts hands-on research with industry and community organizations to develop practical solutions for real-world challenges. Specializing in four areas of applied research – energy, engineered technology, environment and agriculture technology, and geomatics – our collaborations help move Atlantic Canada towards a more sustainable future.

We are enormously grateful to our educators and instructors who continue to provide high-quality, inclusive, and accessible learning amid the challenges of a pandemic. Over the past year, in addition to dealing with these challenges, educators have developed program-level outcomes of sustainability, incorporating elements of equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as green practices and operations. As the College and Nova Scotia communities look to build back better, we all have a vested interest in putting people to work. This can be achieved through investing in innovation and the natural environment through lifelong learning opportunities. Education at NSCC fosters a future that is ecologically sound, equitable, and resilient for generations to come.

For some examples of specific actions the College is taking to promote sustainability in our academics, we invite you to explore our comprehensive SDG Action Plan (Appendix A).

Goals

- Provide meaningful educational experiences attuned to the needs of industries and communities.
- Connect learners with the expertise of professionals in their chosen fields of work for relevant and practical learning to support their success through their entire College experience.
- Actively remove systemic barriers to learning and success by making education accessible and equitable.
- Renew and invest in employee development and learning.
Funding for a new Centre of Forest Innovation at the Truro campus was announced this year. The Centre is made possible by a $6.1 million investment over four years by the Nova Scotia Forestry Innovation Transition Trust in partnership with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, the provincial Forest Sector Council, the Mi’kmawey Forestry Initiative, and the NSCC Foundation. We are beyond excited at the potential for this initiative to boost sustainability of all facets in a crucial natural resource sector.

The Centre will provide specialized opportunities for learners and help strengthen the province’s forestry sector. It will subscribe to a ‘triad model’ of forestry that is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable, based on recommendations from Prof. Bill Lahey’s 2018 review of the forest industry in Nova Scotia. This will be a cornerstone for the sector providing training for people looking to enter the industry or upgrade existing skills, for which they would normally have to go out-of-province to access. It aims to support inclusive social and economic growth, as well as collaboration on applied research, workforce development, and innovation in the province’s forestry sector. A major aim of the program is also to expand diversity of people getting involved in the forestry sector, particularly African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and female learners, as well as youth in rural communities wishing to enter forestry-related fields of study. New equity supports and student awards will be available.

The Centre will be completed in June 2022 and will be ready for students in September later that year. It will have a simulator immersion lab, a demonstration woodlot, innovative technology and programming to meet the needs to the forestry sector, as well as Mi’kmaw-led training to build forest-based businesses and strengthen the forestry workforce within communities. Programming will include:

- Industry-informed micro-credentials for forest sector re-skilling;
- Core certificate programs for new one-year College certificate training, including forest inventory and ecological resource management;
- Future exploration of shorter certifications for other forest professionals such as forest contractors, harvest operators, and arborists.
The term “built environment” refers to the human-made environment that provides the setting for human activity, ranging from individual buildings, parks, and transportation systems to neighborhoods and entire cities. The built environment is made of infrastructure that we can see and touch; however, it can have hidden impacts on both natural ecosystems and social equity. Often these negative impacts are felt more severely by disadvantaged communities, further adding to existing environmental and social pressures.

If we shift our approach to the built environment, we can find ways to use it to support both the natural environment as well as our communities. As an operator of a network of 14 campuses across the province, NSCC has a duty to adapt our built environment to accommodate the broad range of environmental and equity issues faced in modern society.

We will address our greenhouse gas emissions while also reducing our water consumption and waste production. Our buildings will be accessible and support health and well-being for our diverse communities. By addressing the 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals within the context of the built environment, we will achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

Solar Electricity Projects

NSCC has been able to directly contribute to greener electricity for all Nova Scotians. Through the Solar Electricity for Community Buildings Pilot Program, which was run by the Clean Foundation and the Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Mines, Four NSCC campuses (Ivany, Strait Area, Shelburne, and Annapolis Valley) currently have operational photovoltaic (PV) power stations that produce renewable energy for Nova Scotia’s electrical grid. A fifth installation at Lunenburg Campus, will come online in Fall 2021, bringing our total production capacity to 339kW. Installing on-site renewables will be a critical part of our efforts to achieve carbon neutral operations, and we will continue to expand our use of renewables as opportunities arise.

NSCC Greenhouse Gas Emissions Sources 2020/21

- Electricity, 67%
- Oil, 14%
- Propane, 8%
- Natural Gas, 8%
- Steam, 2%
- Wood, 1%
- Fleet Vehicles, 1%
- Rental Vehicles, 0.1%
Energy and Climate Change

With over 3 million square feet of building space dedicated to specialized, industry-driven training, NSCC has a significant energy demand and a sizeable greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions profile. However, we have made significant progress on reducing the environmental impact of our facilities since 2008. The COVID-19 pandemic offered us both challenges and opportunities in our energy needs; reduced occupancy meant we used less energy while still ensuring safe spaces for essential staff and on-campus learning. We were also able to complete several major renovation projects at multiple campuses, increasing the efficiency of our building systems, switching away from fossil fuels, and increasing insulation of our walls and roofs to reduce energy waste. Overall, NSCC’s energy usage was down 27% this year compared to our 2008 baseline year, which helped us achieve our goal of a 25% reduction by 2020. This was due to a collective effort from building operators and occupants to conserve energy during the pandemic. There will be an increase in energy consumption this year as we return to on-campus learning; however, we have learned valuable strategies that we will continue to use as we recover and return to normal operations, putting us on the path to achieve our climate change goals.

Recap 2020

- Completed 75kW solar PV installations at Shelburne, Strait Area and Annapolis Valley Campuses.
- Fuel-switching at Shelburne Campus from oil to wood pellets.
- Fuel-switching at Truro Campus from oil to propane and wood pellets.
- Replaced exterior wall systems at Burridge, Cumberland, Pictou and Truro Campuses.
- Installed electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at Middleton, COGs, and Institute of Technology Campuses.
- Leased EV for use at Annapolis Valley Campus.
- Scaled-down operations and substantially reduced energy consumption at all NSCC Campuses during COVID-19 pandemic.

Goals

- Reduce emissions 60% below 2008 levels by 2030.
- Reduce emissions 80% below 2008 levels by 2040.
- Achieve net-zero operations by 2050.

Actions 2021/22

- Complete 75kW solar PV installation at Lunenburg Campus.
- Tie-in to biomass district energy project at Lunenburg Campus.
- Replace fuel oil boiler at COGS Site with wood-pellet fuel source.
- Encourage more telecommuting and less work-related travel between NSCC Campuses.
- Conduct energy audits at several Campuses.
- Begin roll-out of NSCC Climate Change Action Plan, including campus consultations.

Climate Change Action Plan

In 2022, NSCC will release its own Climate Change Action Plan. This plan will outline how we will address climate change within our organization. Key themes of our Action Plan will include climate change mitigation, adaptation, and education. We will create a pathway to achieve net-zero operations by 2050, adapt our facilities to support communities dealing with the emerging impacts of climate change, and leverage our infrastructure to educate and create awareness about the consequences of human activities on our environment.
NSCC works collaboratively with students, faculty and staff to ensure that the learning environments at our campuses are accessible. While substantial accessibility improvements have been incorporated into building enhancement projects over the last 20 years, all NSCC's campuses still require varying numbers of upgrades to ensure that people with disabilities can access all programs and services.

We intend for our campuses to be fully accessible by 2030 and are now working to provide infrastructure that makes that autonomy a reality for all. This means reducing the presence of barriers that can have a psychological impact and ensuring customized approaches and accommodations. Significant funding has been allocated to further address accessibility issues. NSCC is proud to support the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) program, which helps to improve the accessibility of the built environment in Canada. Ivany Campus was one of the first buildings in Nova Scotia to be RHFAC Certified.

Recap 2020

- Newly completed residence buildings at Strait Area Campus and COGS include fully accessible suites for residents, designed with RHFAC as a guiding principle.
- Improved building entrances, parking, door hardware, stairwells, and furniture at several campuses.
- Upgraded washrooms at IT and Annapolis Valley Campuses to meet accessibility standards.
- Built a new accessible pedway connecting McCarthy Hall and Forrester Hall at Truro Campus.
- Updated design standards and construction practices.

Goal

- All campuses are to be fully accessible by 2030.

Actions 2021/22

- New Sydney Campus (opening in 2024) to be RHFAC Certified.
- Pursue third-party funding grants and opportunities.
- Update accessibility audits to inform future planning.
- Execute accessibility-focused projects at several campuses.
- Track and report on progress.
Water

Water is one of our most important – and increasingly scarce – natural resources. Close to 9% of all fresh water in the world exists in Canada, while less than 1% of the people in the world live here. This perceived wealth of water has led Canada to one of the highest rates of water use per capita in the world. Despite this perceived wealth, Canada has many communities that struggle with access to clean drinking water, including areas of Nova Scotia. Higher temperatures and arid summers stemming from climate change further affect the availability and distribution of rainfall, snowmelt, river flows and groundwater, which results in reduced water quality. Unfortunately, communities impacted by water quality issues are often the same communities that have lack of resources to deal with their impact.

One simple way we can all help ensure access to clean water is to reduce our daily usage. NSCC is a leader in educating employees, students, and the community in water use reduction strategies. Additionally, we conduct routine water quality testing at all our Campuses to ensure that our building occupants have access to clean drinking water.

Recap 2020

- Reduced water consumption where possible during reduced occupancy due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Replaced aging fixtures with low-flow sinks, toilets and urinals when completing various renovations.

Goals

- The College has set aggressive targets in water use reduction and has already exceeded its 2030 goal. Since 2008, the College has achieved a 61% reduction in water use.

Actions 2021/22

- Continue to monitor water quality and ensure our water meets Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines and supports ongoing operation of our campus cafeterias and culinary programs.
- Conduct water audits at all NSCC Campuses to capture changes from renovations and additions to campus infrastructure.

Water System Audits

This year we will conduct audits of Campus water systems to ensure we are capturing all our water-consuming systems in our water management plans. This will also support our BOMA BEST recertification efforts.
Waste
For many years, NSCC has focused our efforts on ensuring that waste produced at our sites makes it into the right waste streams and avoids ending up in landfills. We have been largely successful at diverting waste from landfills, and our rate of diversion has risen substantially over the past decade. However, our new campaign will focus on waste reduction – lowering the quantity of waste produced within our campuses.

Waste reduction lowers our indirect carbon emissions by conserving energy and resources. If less waste is produced by our building occupants, less energy is used to process and dispose of it and fewer GHGs are produced. Currently, NSCC staff and students dispose of 22 kg of waste per person each year. That number can be significantly reduced with increased education efforts towards waste reduction and eliminating single-use or disposable items on campus.

Our waste reduction journey was severely impacted by the pandemic. Our average diversion rate from landfill has fallen from 75% to 65%. Single-use items have seen a resurgence due to public health guidelines. Many more cleaning products are used in our facilities to ensure the safety of our building occupants. Moving forward we will resume conducting waste audits at our campuses once each semester to better understand how to manage our waste streams. We will also install more hydration stations at each campus to support good hygiene and reduced dependance on plastic water bottles.

Goals
- Maintain a minimum 75% diversion rate for each campus.
- Reduce waste disposal to 15 kg/person and year by 2023.
- Reduce waste disposal to 10 kg/person each year by 2030.

Actions 2021/22
- Shift education efforts to focus on waste reduction.
- Install 25 additional Hydration Stations
- Reduce or eliminate the amount of disposable, single-use items being used on campus.

Paper Consumption
NSCC printed 8.2 million fewer pages of paper this year, down 46% compared to 2019. With fewer staff and students on Campus, the need to print decreased as we found new ways to work, and documents become mostly electronic. If we can continue working this way, the amount of paper we use will continue to decrease – thus reducing the need for physical storage for paper and paper entering the landfill waste stream.
Shelburne Campus
Shelburne, NS
75-kilowatt solar photovoltaic array.

Akerley Campus
Dartmouth, NS
Akerley Campus was built in 1969, but major retrofits and energy projects since 2008 have reduced energy intensity by 48% and water consumption by 85%.
Annapolis Valley Campus Residence and Innovation Centre at the Centre of Geographic Sciences (COGS)
Lawrencetown, NS

$9 million, 27,000 sq. ft. building housing a geospatial analytics business research centre and a 40-bed residence.
IT Campus Information Technology Innovation Centre
Halifax, NS

$7 million, 19,000 sq. ft., three-story addition to the IT Campus. This project is focused on job creation and industry-driven problem solving, and will accommodate 100 additional students in IT-centered programs.
Strait Area Campus Residence
Port Hawkesbury, NS

$8 million, 20,000 sq. ft., 4-floor, 51-bed residence expanding the reach of the offerings at the Nautical Institute.