



## Al Martin HCTF Conservation Scholarship Recipient 2026



### Allison Pugh

Allison Pugh is a MSc student in the Natural Resources and Environmental Studies program at the University of Northern British Columbia. Her research focuses on how freshwater fish respond to environmental change, with a particular interest in habitat use and the conservation of cold-water fish species.

Allie completed her BSc. (Honors) Environment and Natural Resources, with a focus on water management, at the University of New Brunswick in her hometown of Fredericton, New Brunswick. Throughout her undergraduate degree, she worked as a Junior Field Technician with the Canadian Rivers Institute (CRI), where she developed her passion for freshwater fish ecology and field research. During this time, she contributed to research on the Wolastoq, located on the unceded territory of the Wolastoqey Nation, and the Miramichi, located on the unceded territories of the Natoaganeg, Metapenagiag Mi'kmaq, and Esgenoôpetitj First Nations. Her first independent research project evolved into her honour's thesis, which examined interactions between striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) and juvenile Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in the Miramichi River.

Following the completion of her undergraduate degree, Allison joined the Freshwater Fish Ecology lab upon being accepted to the University of Northern British Columbia. Her master's research investigates how rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) use thermal habitats and cold-water refuges within the Stellako River watershed, located on the unceded traditional territory of the Stella'En First Nation. This river supports culturally, ecologically, and economically important fish populations that are increasingly threatened by rising water temperatures associated with climate change.

To better understand how rainbow trout respond to warming river conditions, Allison combines drone-based thermal infrared imagery, a net work of in-stream temperature loggers, habitat surveys, acoustic telemetry, and snorkel surveys to identify and characterize critical thermal refuges and evaluate how fish use these habitats throughout the summer. By identifying and mapping these important habitats, her research aims to improve our understanding of how rainbow trout cope with thermal stress and provide information that supports the conservation and management of salmonids in British Columbia under a changing climate.



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