



# RESEARCH2REALITY

Shining a light on research & innovation.

## Trees: A Part of our Heritage

An Interview with Professor Sally Aitken  
Forest Conservation Ecologist, University of British Columbia

### What is the science behind modern forestry?

I love forests and I love trees, and many people do. They are an integral part of our Canadian landscapes. They cover a lot of the country. And they supply us with a lot of benefits: cleaner air, cleaner water, habitat for the many animals and plants that live in our forests. But we also get wood, fibre, and we get jobs from our forests. So they are important to us as a nation.

### What makes your research important?

In Canada, we plant over half a billion trees annually. We put a lot of trees into the ground and we need to make decisions about what trees we plant. It used to be very simple because foresters followed a general rule of local is best. They knew that if they got seed from local populations, the seedlings they grew would be adapted to those conditions, but those conditions have changed. And so now we need to better match those seedlings with the environments that they will do well in, and that will determine what our future planted forests will look like.

### What are the practical applications of your research?

The goal of our research is to improve forest management, to improve reforestation in a rapidly changing world, in a rapidly warming world. And so we are fortunate to be directly connected with the people who make the policy decisions around what can be planted, where on our crown lands in Canada. And so we have a direct way to influence policy to improve the outcomes for forests.