

**NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **NIC receives \$134,000 for aquaculture research**

### *Micro-hatcheries could help shellfish companies diversify*

May 3, 2017 – The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) has awarded NIC’s Centre of Applied Research, Technology and Innovation a \$134,000 grant to diversify BC’s shellfish industry.

NSERC announced the Applied Research Tools and Instruments grant at the Colleges and Institutes Canada conference in Ottawa this week.

“We are extremely thankful to NSERC for supporting our equipment request, and helping us build a stronger, more sustainable shellfish industry on the BC Coast,” said Randall Heidt, NIC’s Vice President of Strategic Initiatives. “The micro-hatchery NIC plans to develop could be instrumental in helping shellfish operators turn their best performing shellfish into seed adapted for their local growing conditions.”

Under the current system, larger hatcheries supply hundreds of farm sites along the BC and Pacific Northwest coast.

“With climate change, we know the whole coast isn’t changing the same way at the same time,” said Dr. Stephen Cross, NIC’s NSERC-funded Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Sustainable Aquaculture. “Individual bays may have quite different growing conditions based on the amount of fresh water they get, the tidal mixing, temperature, pH – all of it.”

He adds that producers often transport seed hundreds of kilometres with no guarantee of results.

“Introduced into variable local conditions, this hatchery seed may not have time to adapt to all local growing conditions, which could mean 100 per cent survival or 100 per cent mortality,” said Cross. “We want to see if we can produce a piece of technology affordable to operate onsite that could then diversify seed production for farms on the coast.”

In 2016, Cross co-authored a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) study on aquaculture diversification as an adaptive response to climate change. This equipment, and the subsequent micro-hatchery research and development, represents one way to support and strengthen the industry as growing conditions change and oceans acidify.

“We’re really talking about diversifying shellfish production approaches as a strategy to adapt to climate change,” he said.

The equipment will reside within a small floating facility, anchored at a shellfish farm, and will support all production phases, from seed to harvest, under local environmental conditions.

Cross will develop and test a prototype micro-hatchery with the Kwakiutl First Nation, who are interested in developing one of BC’s native cockle species for commercial production in their traditional territory.

“This equipment is essential to clam culture development of our native food species, the cockle, and represents a new production species for British Columbia,” said Kwakiutl Fisheries Manager Steven Child.

Cross is an internationally acclaimed NIC researcher who was first awarded the NSERC Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Sustainable Aquaculture in 2013. His innovative work has been featured in *Maclean’s* magazine, *National Geographic* and more.

“We really appreciate the multi-year funding NSERC has provided,” said Heidt. “We thank them so much for their innovation and support and we hope to be able to announce additional projects in the future.”

For more information on CARTI or NIC’s applied aquaculture research, visit [www.nic.bc.ca/research](http://www.nic.bc.ca/research).

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