

Lori Robinson grew up in the potato industry



Lori Robinson grew up on her family's potato farm in Albany. Growing up she never pictured herself as being the one in her family to take over her family's farming operation; but now 25 years later, Lori is proudly the 6th generation of Eric C Robinson Inc. and she couldn't imagine herself doing anything else.

When Lori began her journey in agriculture there were very few female farmers, especially in rural PEI. But Lori never saw being a female building a business as a barrier. Over the past decades she has and continues to pave the path for young women becoming involved in agriculture.

Even though she spends the majority of her time at the farm, she enjoys travelling the world and coaching her nephew's curling team during the winter months. Farming is in Lori's blood and despite the challenges she wouldn't want to be doing anything else.

What does your job as Farm Manager at Eric C Robinson Inc. entail?

I oversee the day to day working of the farming operations, sales of our grain & soybeans, the rental of our land; up until just recently we also grew, washed, packed, and marketed table and seed potatoes. In January, we made the announcement that we would be discontinuing our potato operation. Since then we have rented out the land intended for potatoes, along with renting out the packing plant and potato storages.

Going forward we plan to focus more on grains, soybeans and other up and coming crops to PEI. It is still my responsibility to oversee all of the land owned by our family and the company; and oversee growing and man-

aging our main cash crops, soybeans, small grains, mainly barley and some forages.

How long have you been involved in agriculture/food industry on PEI?

I had a genuine interest in agriculture and our family business in my high school years, but after I graduated from the University of Guelph in 1991, I stayed at the university and worked in crop research until February of 1994. I returned to PEI to join my father who was managing the family's farming operation at the time, and I have been working here ever since.

What is your education/experience prior to entering your current job?

After high school I went to the University of Guelph and I received my Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, majoring in Agricultural Business and minoring in Environmental Studies. Once I graduated I got hired in the crop science department at the University of Guelph and worked there for three years until I returned to PEI to farm full time.

Are you involved in any extracurricular or community activities?

Within agriculture I did sit on the Crop Insurance Board for PEI for 11 years and chaired it for my last two years. I currently sit on the Capital Campaign Committee of the PEI Humane Society, known as the "Expanding Our Paw Print Campaign". The goal of the campaign is to raise the necessary funds to renovate and expand the existing facilities to ensure the health and wellness of companion animals in PEI. I

am a certified Level 2 Canadian Curling Coach, and for the past two years have coached a team of U18 Junior Boys that represented PEI at two Canadian Curling Championships and the 2019 Canada Games.

What's your favourite way to eat PEI Potatoes?

I am a big fan of baby red potatoes, roasted with a little olive oil and herbs. I am not really a fan of putting anything on my potatoes, I like them just plain and simple.

When you were a kid, what did you want to do when you grew up?

I had a lot of different plans, I can remember a time where my best friend and I wanted to be underwater photographers. I was pretty good at math and I thought that I could do something in the math and computer science field. Also at one point I thought I wanted to go into medicine; I got diagnosed as a type 1 diabetic at the age of 11 so I had quite an interest in medical research.

In the mid 80s my brother announced that, even though he was the one expected to take over the farm, he didn't want to be a farmer, and that is when I realized that farming was something that I really wanted to do.

So I tagged along behind my dad, following him in his footsteps and decided that I had wanted to be involved in agriculture. Unfortunately for me there were no female role models in agriculture around that time, so it seemed like an odd occupation choice; but thankfully my parents were very supportive and never said to me, "Lori you're a girl, you shouldn't be a farmer". My parents only encouraged me to be whatever I wanted to be. Once I started taking a bigger interest in the farm, and realized that I could go to university and study Agriculture and return home to a family business that is when I officially made up my mind that I wanted to pursue a career in agriculture.



Lori Robinson

What would you want consumers to know about your business and the agriculture/food industry?

Currently there is quite a disconnect between people who work in agriculture and the consumers who are consuming our products. One of the biggest things that people should remember is that the products that I am growing, I am also feeding my family, neighbors and friends. To me as a farmer, we are producing the safest crops that we possibly can. It is not all about just making money, it is about sustaining and developing our businesses and food efficiently, environmentally, and financially. Mostly, farmers are responsible bunch. If we are going to increase the chances of having longevity in our food industry, we need to do what is best for the land and our businesses, and we are using all the tools available to us to do that.

Why do you do what you do?

There is something about being outdoors for me, I love the smell of freshly tilled earth. There is a renewed sense of optimism and hope every time you put a new crop in the ground. We have just come through a very difficult harvest, and a bit of a challenging spring; and yes I think the farmer in me is an internal optimist, and I enjoy the challenge of something new and in agriculture there is always new challenges that cause you to learn more. I really love my job and it makes it easy for me to get up and go to work and work long hours and deal with all the stresses that come with it, because ultimately I just love it.

(Editor's note - this profile of potato producer Lori Robinson was prepared by Farm and Food Care PEI as part of its "Faces of Farming" series. It is reprinted with permission.)



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