

Women in Leadership Positions in Canadian Agriculture

LYNDA ATKINSON | MIXED FARMING & VOLUNTEER [QUESNEL, BRITISH COLUMBIA]

Lynda Atkinson was always interested in farming, but it wasn't until she retired from a career in education, counselling, and administration that she began her second career in agriculture.

Lynda has now owned farm land in Quesnel, British Columbia for more than forty years. Together with her husband and other family members, she owns Sisters Creek Farm, a 600-acre farm in the Cariboo region of BC that is situated in the province's agriculture land reserve.

"As soon as we could afford to buy land, we starting accruing acreage, first fourteen acres, then forty acres, and then together as a family, we purchased our current farm twenty-five years ago," said Lynda. "By working together, and scaling up as we could, we had no mortgage on the land, which was important to us."

Sisters Creek Farm is a mixed farming operation with Simmental beef cattle, Standardbred horses, and a small chicken and egg production. The farm is family-run, and Lynda also employs a farm manager who lives on the property.

Lynda is passionate about building agricultural capacity within the region, the province, and the country. While her experience is primarily with small farm operations, she fully acknowledges the importance of large farms, particularly in food production worldwide.

"It is such a great experience to work with agricultural leaders across the country," Lynda said. "It's such a learning opportunity. The innovation and environmentally approved practices that are in agriculture today are truly inspiring, and many women are at the forefront."

Lynda enjoys working on the agricultural boards and contributing toward global food security and innovative practices. She is a director on five agriculture boards: the [Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council](#) (CAHRC), the [BC Agriculture Council](#) (BCAC), the [Canadian Federation of Agriculture](#) (CFA-FCA), [Horse Council British Columbia](#), and the Kersley Farmers Institute.

"There are many women on the boards that I serve on and they are all working towards that common goal of developing food security and innovative, successful practices in Canadian agriculture."

When asked how the role of women in agriculture has changed over the last couple of decades, Lynda said, "Years ago it was often the men that worked off the farm to service the debt and the women worked on the farm. In this area, the smaller farms of twenty to six hundred acres that are ranches and vegetable producers have women that are integrally involved.

"There is also an urban agriculture movement. Women are farming small, quarter-acre lots in an urban environment growing micro greens in the winter and food for themselves or to sell at farmer's markets the rest of the year. Lots of women also do landscaping projects. Women are very involved in agriculture here."