

MWAF interview, Champion's Project: Ricky Chad Seelhof

Work title/s: Lady Rancher, Administrator of the BC Women in Agriculture, Chair of the Public Affairs and Education committee for BC Cattlemen's association, Committee member for the Young Cattlemen's Council of Canada, Beef and horse 4-H Leader.

Education: Licenced Practical Nurse

1. What are the main milestones of your career?

I grew up on a mixed-farm, grain and cattle, in SK and being part of 4-H. I always loved being around animals and wanting to do better. After high school I obtained a licence as Practical Nurse. I met my husband in 4-H and both of our families moved to BC. I continue to work as nurse for 1 years but then realized that I enjoyed much more being a rancher. I switched and became a full-time rancher. When we came to BC from SK I found that things were very different and challenging, which was exciting to me. My husband and I worked very hard and in 2006 we bought a smaller ranch that was down river from my in laws place. It tied in perfectly with the rest of the place. In 2016, we successfully completed the succession plan, and bought the rest of the ranch. Both, my family and in-laws ended very happy. That is a big milestone for me. **Also, every year we make it through is a milestone for me.**

2. What were the reasons of your milestones?

I think it is the challenge of the small successes, e.g., the cows that graze a little longer, more bales of hay. Those little steps, one after the other keep me going. When one thing doesn't work, you have to change them quickly, innovate and think creatively to make them work.

3. What motivates you in good times and through road blocks?

What motivates me is just raising my own family in this kind of environment. It motivates me through the good times. Also, my husband. He is open-minded and sees the big picture. Having a conversation with him helps me through the challenges. I also believe in a higher power and try to practice gratitude everyday by writing in my journal, being grateful for the small things in life because that is what matters the most. We try to raise our kids and teach them that not all that matters are material things, that God has given us a lot to enjoy.

4. Did you see yourself as a taking a leadership role in this field before?

No, I didn't. However, I've always enjoyed leadership positions throughout my high school, in 4-H and outside the school. For instance, I took executive positions in groups and community activities.

5. Why are you involved with gender issues in ag?

I enjoy keeping people involved in the industry and knowing what's going on. I am a life-long learner and enjoy passing it to others. Growing up it was just me and my sister, the boys came in later. My dad relied on us to help on the farm. We did jobs that would be done by boys traditionally. It didn't dawn on me that there would be a different way, the "can't do" way of thinking. I am leading the BC Women in Ag group because I want more women involved in the industry and be around like-minded people.

6. Please comment on what's been going on with women in ag up to now? What's going on now? What do you see happening in the future?

Now I see a lot more women involved in agriculture. It's not mostly men like before. I think in the future we'll see even more women. For example, right now there are more girls than boys in 4-H.

7. What are you doing now? Why?

What am I doing now and why? What drives me is that I am slowly seeing a shift of beliefs that are anti-animal agriculture. And that right there scares the heck out of me!!! I am not an extremist and don't believe any of us should be either. I believe in balance, harmony and all things working together. Everyday, I try a little harder to leave this world a better place. We are very lucky to live in a society where we have the right to choose what we feed our families, and of course, no matter how we do it. I want it to stay that way and not be penalized for what we choose!! So, my goal is to keep promoting the importance and benefits not just of animal agriculture but all commodities across the board.

I'm also the Chair of the Public affairs and Education committee for BC Cattlemen's association and a committee member for the Young Cattlemen's Council of Canada. Beef and horse 4-H Leader.

8. What would you like to leave behind you after retirement?

Knowing that I contributed to filling the gap between the producer and consumer of where their food comes from. Seeing/hearing stories from REAL people of who produce quality protein. Having more women in Ag (moms, aunts, Grandmas, whoever!) Share their experiences, connect with other women who are questioning where their food is coming from. Build a trust with the consumers that its ok to eat natures protein. And that we all work together.....all commodities across the board do their very best to produce the best quality food. We aren't just raising cows, we are building life skills in our families, creating a healthy ecosystem , and have less impact on the environment. And for my family! I want my kids to be able to do whatever they want, that they believe in themselves and never give up. I have 2 girls and one boy.

9. What do you think are the most important characteristic good leaders should have?

1) Integrity, believing in what you do, 2) truthful and honesty, 3) down to earth, 4) be willing to listen. I teach my kids that they should treat others the way they want to be treated. You get out of life what you give.

10. What do you think is necessary to engage industry in gender conversations and make progress for the women's file in Canada?

We need to deal with the gap between consumers and producers. It scares me how much out of touch consumers can be in regards of how we produce protein. We as producers really need to step up and build trust, be aware of what's going on in the world and lead by example.