

A Change in Vision Leads Quesnel's Moose Meadows Farm to Success

It all started with a simple plan: a small farm with a few chickens, a couple of horses and 20 acres to grow Christmas trees. Heloise and her husband were not looking to become major players in the agricultural industry; they simply wanted a lifestyle for themselves and their two daughters that allowed for self-sufficiency and sustainability.

As many entrepreneurs know, not all plans end up as envisioned. When the smallest farmland they could find to purchase was 65 acres, Dixon-Warren foresaw greater opportunities for their business. Last month at the Today's Woman Awards Banquet in Prince George, she was awarded for taking advantage of those opportunities with the Innovator of the Year Award.

"It quickly became obvious that for our farm to work, we needed to be diverse," says Dixon-Warren. "The farm incorporates agritourism, agriforestry, non-timber forest products such as Christmas trees, birch syrup, evergreen floral (wreaths, swags and garland) in addition to more traditional farm products like free-range eggs, alpaca and llama fibre products, horse pasture and wild jellies."

Last year Dixon-Warren was an instrumental player in the establishment of FARMED (Farming - Agriculture - Rural - Marketing - Eco - Diversification), an organization dedicated to providing networking, partnerships, mentoring and educational opportunities for its members. Being the President of FARMED has allowed for many strategic alliances and partnerships.

"The group has been incredibly well received at the local, regional and provincial levels of government," says Dixon-Warren. "By creating this organization, agricultural producers, with an interest in diversification, have a voice in our local area." A project the group just completed is a Farm Tour Brochure showcasing 12 different local farms. Dixon-Warren's farm has been able to benefit from marketing, education and partnerships that may not otherwise have been possible.

Dixon-Warren has experienced a lot of change and growth in her business in the last five and a half years. Her words of wisdom for women looking to grow a business of their own: "Adapt... or die. We try very hard to adapt to market trends rather than trying to direct them. It comes down to listening to your customers and making sure you stay ahead of the market to meet their needs".

Women's Enterprise Centre serves women across the province from its offices in Kelowna, Victoria, and Vancouver. For more information call 1-800-643-7014 or visit www.womensenterprise.ca.