

Blog post.

Rural wine and food tourism across one very large country.

By Danielle Robinson, August 2019

Who?

I'm a PhD Candidate in Rural Studies at the University of Guelph, but I live with my family in Penticton, British Columbia. In addition to my studies, I teach courses in tourism planning, wine and culinary tourism and sustainable tourism at Okanagan College.

What and where?

My research explores the relationships between local food cultures, sustainability and rural tourism development in two wine regions with a particular focus on related policy.

Thanks to a RPLC Research & Exchanges Service Research Grant and the support of my advisor, Dr. Wayne Caldwell, committee and exchange host, Dr. Kathleen Kevany, Professor and Director of Rural Research Collaborative in the Faculty of Agriculture at Dalhousie University's Truro campus, I've had the opportunity to conduct a comparative study of Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley and British Columbia's Okanagan Valley.



Kathleen provided expertise on issues related to rural food sovereignty, acted as a conduit to community introductions in Nova Scotia and accompanied me on a day of exploring food and wine in this rural landscape. She was nice enough to snap this windy day photo of me!

Why?

Wine and food tourism is one of the fastest growing rural tourism niches and intersects with critical cultural sustainability issues such as local food systems, food sovereignty and agricultural land use, therefore, it is particularly important to explore cultural sustainability in food and wine tourism contexts.

The Okanagan has over 170 wineries while Nova Scotia has just over 20. The different provincial contexts and different sizes and stages of development present useful learning opportunities. This exchange was important because knowing a place is only possible through firsthand experience. I was quite familiar with the Okanagan region, as I have lived in the area for 15 years and have been actively involved in the wine industry here. I had never been to Nova Scotia.



Lightfoot & Wolfville Winery in Nova Scotia



Covert Farm's vineyard in Oliver, British Columbia

When?

Fall 2018 through Summer 2019

My research and exchange involved in-person field work and virtual research. I spent 2 weeks in the Annapolis Valley in May and I revisited the region for several days in August. Ideally, I would have liked to stay in Nova Scotia throughout the research period, but I have 2 kids, so that was impractical. Fortunately, technology supported communication and research across distances. In BC, I was able to spread out my field research since the case communities were within commuting distance.

What have I learned and what can I share?

I am so grateful for the opportunity to receive funding from the RPLC to help me conduct my dissertation research. It took several months to transcribe and code the 58 hours of interviews! I am in the process of shaping that analysis into findings and discussion for my dissertation. Once my research process is complete, I will have a better understand of the relationships between rural food and wine tourism, food sovereignty, cultural sustainability. Then I will be able to provide recommendations to help guide rural policy the maximizes the positive contributions of rural tourism. Participants in both regions expressed enthusiasm about the project and interest in receiving the research results, so I plan to share research findings in a community/business friendly format along with academic papers and conference presentations.