

## **Robin Rigby Trust Final Report**

My desire for my master's thesis research originated when I completed a research investigation for the IIS called "The Heart of Mother Earth" which I co-published with Dr. Irene Novaczek in 2010. This study took place on Chiloé Island, Chile in 2008. Among my findings were people's concerns about the establishment of large corporations that came to the area in the late 1980s, and had turned what was once an artisan and agricultural society into a labourer society. Another of my findings concerned the aquaculture industry's practices, which proved to be unsustainable and lacked social and environmental values. This lack of understanding and recognition by the industry for these values resulted in the loss of many jobs and the destruction of the environment.

These experiences formed my interest in wanting to seek out an alternative to traditional development plans, and this has led me to social enterprises as an alternative economy which could assist geographically marginalized peoples. This research investigation is a qualitative enquiry where the narrative serves as the main mode of data collection. For people on Chiloé and Maine's Penobscot islands who may feel marginalized, allowing their stories to be told of their own accord may serve to empower them. It is hoped this investigation will find what aspects of social enterprises aid in helping their members to improve their quality of life. Finally, the findings of this investigation are to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the subject, and to assist policy makers and community leaders when looking for new forms of economy that positively impact their island communities in a sustainable manner.

### **Brief description of research methodology and time frame to date**

For the purpose of this investigation, I am performing a comparative case study on the islands of Maine, United States and some islands within the Chiloé archipelago, Chile. In Maine, the islands chosen for the study are those islands located in the Penobscot Bay Islands community (Vinalhaven, Monheagan, and Northhaven). In Chiloé the islands selected are the Quinchao and Lemuy islands, however, It is important to mention that interviews include people from the islands selected for the study as well as some from Castro and other communities, especially those recommended to me by past interview participants. I can say that I decided to include interviews of other organizations to ensure that my sample size was reached.

In both places, Maine and Chiloé, the location and the isolation of some small islands was a challenge. It was important for me to experience some of the main 'challenges' islanders face in their daily life especially for the local businesses. I 'll put special emphasis on 'challenge' because for most of the local businesses it is not a difficulty, but a challenge they have to overcome in order to survive, whether they run a social enterprise, a nonprofit organization, or a traditional for-profit enterprise. This experience as well let me understand the importance of

connectivity and logistics as the main key for survival. Thanks to the linkages established in the coastal communities it was possible for me to mobilize and create new linkages that later served as bridges to reach more isolated islands.

Interviews in Maine included traditional enterprises, nonprofit organizations and social enterprises. In Maine was relatively easy to define and identify the legal structure of the organizations. The majority of the businesses are formalized and independent from the state, and it wasn't difficult to identify a social enterprise. In Chiloe as mentioned in my previous report, there are enterprises with limited responsibility, known as 'traditional' enterprises. There are also the independent people who run small businesses or services, and various groups of people who work together in an informal cooperative structure to obtain benefits. The majority of these groups come together to meet some social need, and may or may not have a commercial goal. There are some informal organizations that are formed to meet commercial aims. In Chile, because the legal classifications of businesses were more complex than those used in the state of Maine, United States my interviews included local authorities, private businesspersons and workers in cooperatives, labor union workers, workers who are part of various Committees and functional organizations. The time spent collecting my interviews in Chiloe was more extensive and time absorbing, but the three months that I spent on the islands of Chiloé was sufficient for my work.

To date I have conducted field research on small islands in Maine U.S.A. and Chiloe, Chile (from November 2011 to July of 2012). During this time I was able to collect a great deal of interview data as well as first person observations. I was able to talk with community members and to make my own observations on each island, and this data is ready to be processed and analyzed. I am currently working on the data collected from field research performed, especially transcribing interviews. While in Maine I did 8 online interviews, and 20 in person interviews with 17 organizations. In Chile I obtained 20 interviews with 17 organizations. I plan to undertake Nvivo training to help analyze transcripts once transcription has been completed. This work will be crucial to conclude the last stage of my research. One important aspect I was able to accomplish on my second visit to Maine was to collect secondary data at Harvard University where I concluded my fieldwork in July of 2012 in Boston, USA. This opportunity has been of great value to my research since secondary data on social enterprises was an unknown and scarcely explored area, and as a result it was difficult to find material about social enterprises in both Maine and Chiloe.

**With regard to the questions asked by the RT guide, until today the time stipulated to do my field work has been sufficient for my research.**

I did my first round of fieldwork in Maine in November of 2011 and the second part in July of 2012. In Chile the research was undertaken in February until the middle of May of 2012. I started in Chile at the beginning of the summer and concluded it at the beginning of fall (Chile's seasons are directly opposite to Canada's). One of

the commonalities of both study sites is their short season of summer, which is crucial to their local economy since most of enterprises obtain much of their profit on in those months. While in Maine the high season occurs in June, July and August, which is the mid- winter for the Chilotes. The high season for the southern Chileans is January, February and March. I could say that working in a time closer to winter time has been the more efficient time than summer for my research. I spent a month in winter and a month in summer in Maine. In Chile I concluded my work in summer which was a busy time for most of the participants. While in Chile I did most of my work toward the end of my stay, which was in their fall. This was a good season, but most of my interviews were done in the afternoon; this time was appropriate for me to perform participant observation and engage in the community activities for the season. In both places I was able to engage in some community activities such as meetings (Chamber of commerce general meeting, MISCA meeting to adjudicate a house, Women's Programs for Development or PRODEMU who promote entrepreneurship for women, Programs for Local Development or PRODESAL which provides training for farmers, and other technical assistance) celebrations, events and daily working activities for some businesses. Staying in the communities also gave me the opportunity to perform a holistic overview of community daily life on the islands.

### **Cooperation, Linkages and Sustainability**

As I stated previously the linkages established through the two coastal communities and later through participants, authorities, and local people, bridged to new relationships that facilitated my work, especially on the most remote islands of both Maine and Chiloe. This project was originally supported by two coastal research organizations (The Island Institute, Maine and the Institute of Island Studies, PE); and a tribal council on Chiloe (The Williche Council of Chiefs or WCC). However at the end of the field work it is important to mention the support of many other organizations that collaborated with me during my fieldwork. I would take the time to mention a few of them, in Maine; the Chamber of Commerce of Vinalhaven, Art Community and Recreations Center of Maine (ARC), The Town Office of Vinalhaven ME who offered their space and equipment for me to work, The Farm Project of Monheagan which introduced me to other organizations on the island. In Chile, the Chamber of Commerce of Castro, and various PRODESAL offices of the Chiloe Province, and the Quinchao Municipality with special attention to the Quinchao Health Center who provided transportation to the most remote islands through the 'Heath center rondas', which are daily visits they have scheduled with their team of doctors to attend the eight remote islands that fall under the Quinchao jurisdiction.

As a researcher I can say that this experience has forged new skills that will serve both my professional and personal development. I have furthered my ability to communicate with people of different socioeconomic status, but also with different customs, culture and education. I have learned to simplify the rigour of

questionnaire or survey interviews with a more friendly conversation while maintaining ethical considerations, and without disrupting or exceeding the scope of my research.

One of the skills you gain on an island is to be creative and adaptable; and to adapt to the conditions and scarce resources found on an island and create ways to accomplish your work. As for the coastal community organizations and the various entities I engaged with in my work, one of the main skills they might find is the openness, the opportunity to have new scholars and create linkages with other organizations whether they are in their neighboring communities or on the other side of the continent. Many organizations showed an enormous interest in the research and are interested in knowing what a social enterprise is, but especially to know about other similar islands' social enterprises.

The short term significance of this study will be to support upcoming projects on Chiloe Island by the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) and the General Council of Chiefs and some islands communities of the archipelago. The IIS will be launching an important project in 2012 on Chiloe Island; one of its main goals will be to create new alternatives for employment of youth on the small islands of Quinchao, Puqueldon (Lemuy) and Quellon. Alternatives of employment are important, especially for rural youth who might face difficulties finding a job on the island due to the collapse of the salmon industry, which for almost 30 years was the motor of employment in the 10<sup>th</sup> region. One of the future short term benefits for this research investigation will be to provide the IIS and the General Williche Council of Chiefs with information, not only regarding social enterprises but also with a general overview of the local economy of the islands in both Maine and Chiloe. This research hopefully will help them to understand the types of economy established on the islands; gender roles, and what's the role of the social enterprises as the nonprofit organization in island community development; how these organizations have overcome the challenges related to their geographical location; and for those that couldn't, what were the complications involved? Finally, and most important, how do all these organizations contribute to the islander's Quality of Life. As for the long term, this research will allow participants of remote islands to present their accounts and stories, and to define on their own terms what a social enterprise and quality of life means to them, especially when living on small islands that have different socio-historical and economic contexts.

Every year the Island Institute of Maine holds a conference called the Sustainable Island Conference and I had the opportunity of attending the conference in October 2011. It was interesting to meet and see a great number of islanders (from simple citizens, to farmers, fishermen, business persons but also youth included on the event). It has been interesting for my research to see how important sustainability is for the majority of the participants. Even in Chiloe, an archipelago situated at the end of the continent and an area with low levels of literacy (especially among the local people running their business) it was not rare to hear people concerned about sustainability. It was a word that was mentioned again and again; they might not

have expressed the word directly, but they expressed an enormous concern for it and for the vitality of their islands.

As part of my final report I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the people that through this Robin Rigby Trust scholarship have made it possible for me to pursue my research project called "From Maine to Chiloe". Without their financial support I would not have been able to complete the comparative study between Maine and Chiloe. I am currently working to conclude the last stage of my research for the upcoming year, which will be to analyze the data collected during my field research work. Once completed, the thesis will be available through the Canada Research Thesis Portal, and the database of UPEI dissertations (Dissertations & Theses@ University of Prince Edward Island). I will make sure that the Robin Rigby Trust as well as those participants of the islands of Maine and Chiloé who do not have access to the internet can have access to a hard copy that will be sent directly to the support organizations such as the Island Institute and the General Williche Council of Chiefs of Chiloé, Chile.

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