

An extraordinary life and an extraordinary vision

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY BSc graduate Robin Rigby passed away in a tragic motor vehicle accident in December 2007 near her home in Shirahama, Japan. She was 30 years old. Less than a year later, when many parents would still be immobilized by the shock, Doug and Mary Rigby of Halifax had turned their tragedy into something positive. The Robin Rigby Trust has already awarded crucial funding to three young researchers who are now pursuing research in the field of coastal management that Robin loved so well.

The Robin Rigby Trust is an extraordinary gift to Saint Mary's University and the young people it is benefiting, now and in the future. Through this trust, Doug and Mary Rigby have pledged \$150,000 to Saint Mary's, \$25,000 of which will be paid out in awards each year for the next six years. The awards are aimed at young people who are conducting research in some aspect of coastal management. They can be Canadian students who want to study abroad, or students from other countries wishing to study in Canada.

The Rigbys' connection with Saint Mary's dates back to Robin's years as an undergraduate here. As someone

with dyslexia, she found school challenging. But when she arrived at university, say her parents, "Saint Mary's opened the world to her. She had the support of the Atlantic Centre when she needed it and we all appreciated the values-oriented education she received, with its emphasis on service and commitment to community."

Robin graduated with her BSc from Saint Mary's, then went on to earn an MSc at Dalhousie and a PhD from Hokkaido University in Japan. At the time of her death, she was working as the co-ordinator of NaGISA (Natural Geography in Shore Areas) at the Seto Marine Biological Laboratory of Kyoto University.

"This award," says Tony Charles, a professor of Management Science and Environmental Studies at Saint Mary's, "is one of the most innovative donations I've ever heard of." The Rigbys are equally enthusiastic about the university's response to their proposal. "We spoke initially with Tony Charles, who works in Robin's area of study, and Heather Fitzpatrick from the Development Office," says Doug. "We were surprised and thrilled at their openness and flexibility, and grateful that the university has allowed us to house the trust there."

"The university was willing to imagine with us," adds Mary, "and it was sympathetic to our wish to move forward quickly and with as little red tape as possible. We were amazed by its extraordinary vision."

Tony Charles agrees. "This project has gone from concept to reality in a very short time," he says. "We've seen results right away. There was a good batch of applicants and the initial three award recipients provide a nice balance of work. This trust is helping to support their dreams. And for Saint Mary's, being able to channel these funds is very much an outreach activity, one that is socially responsible and that has the potential to benefit international students. It reflects our mission and values in an innovative way."

Saint Mary's financially administers the trust and a five-member volunteer panel selects and monitors the projects that receive funding through the trust. Mary is a member of this volunteer panel but abstains from selecting individuals to receive funding. "We wanted one of us to be there to show our continued commitment to the trust, but not to interfere in the decision-making."

Mary and Doug set up the Robin Rigby Trust to be a celebration of Robin's life and, as Mary says, "to put into action our commitment to Robin." It works both ways. "We at Saint Mary's University celebrate the Rigbys' commitment to research and education and extend our gratitude for this generous and thoughtful gift to young researchers," says Heather Fitzpatrick, Director of Development.



The late Robin Rigby (BSc '97), Japan 2007. Photo courtesy of the Rigby family.





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Tony Charles, professor of Management Science and Environmental Studies, Saint Mary’s University

Anuradha Rao

Anuradha Rao’s field of study is coastal conservation and rehabilitation and the identification of coastal resources. Her project is taking place in the Kommetjie community area on the Southern Cape Peninsula of South Africa. Working with South Africa environmental and wildlife groups, Anu plans to engage the local community in the restoration of sand dunes and beaches. Part of the project will involve replacing alien plant species with native ones, and Anu hopes that the project will also provide employment and training to some of the more disadvantaged people in the area.

“This award has given me a great opportunity to take an idea and explore it, giving me valuable experience that I can take back to Canada. I’m very grateful to the Robin Rigby Trust for allowing me to do this work and for providing another important stepping stone in my career.”

Tiffanie Rainville

Tiffanie Rainville is studying the impact of climate change on coastal communities. Her four months of fieldwork will take her to southern Ecuador where she will look closely at three mangrove communities. Her aim is to assess the value of the mangroves to the local communities in terms of water quality and protection from rising sea levels, and to find ways to help those communities understand and protect themselves from threats to the mangroves.

“The Robin Rigby Trust made my whole project possible,” says Tiffanie. “I am thrilled and honoured—and very thankful—to have received this wonderful and generous award from the Rigbys. My project would have been just a dream without them.”

Melanie Zurba

Melanie Zurba’s field of study is sustainable coastal and marine resource management and indigenous co-management systems. Her fieldwork will be spent in Caldwell, Northern Queensland, Australia, working with the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation and looking at the relationship between the Giringun and the government. She hopes to help create an indigenous protected area (IPA) that will give local people more say over how the area and its resources are used. The framework of the

IPA created in Australia will then be related back to a coastal area in Canada.

“I am very happy and grateful to have received this award,” says Mel. “I am very passionate about my field of study and its potential to make a difference. To be given this wonderful opportunity to explore solutions is very personally rewarding to me.”



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In Memory of P. Robin Rigby

If you wish to make a donation to the Robin Rigby Trust at Saint Mary's University, please complete this form and mail (or fax) to the address below. A charitable receipt will be issued for all donations. **

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The Robin Rigby Trust



Dr. Patricia Robin Rigby (Feb. 28/77- Dec. 9/07) passed away in a tragic vehicle accident in December 2007 near her home in Shirahama, Japan. Robin received her B.Sc. at Saint Mary's University and M.Sc. at Dalhousie and went on to earn a Doctorate at Hokkaido University in Japan. The co-ordinator of NaGISA (Natural Geography in Shore Areas), Robin worked at the Seto Marine Biological Laboratory of Kyoto University. She was married to Kohta Asamidori.

The Robin Rigby Trust, established by Robin's parents, Doug and Mary Rigby, provides a way for her family and friends to celebrate her life and promote the goals that she held dear.

Purpose

Robin appreciated the need to adopt alternative resource use strategies within varied local frameworks. The primary function of the Robin Rigby Trust is to support other young people in the identification, sustainable use and conservation of shoreline and nearshore natural resources. The Trust aims to provide qualified individuals with the opportunity to develop and carry out projects that focus on sustainable development in coastal areas in conjunction with coastal communities, in institutional or field settings.

Individuals should be current university students or recent university graduates who are now either early-career university support staff / faculty, or affiliated with environmental or development-oriented non-governmental organizations. Those from a wide range of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields are eligible to apply for funding. A key element in all projects funded will be a well-established linkage between the applicant and one or more coastal communities or coastal-focused non-governmental organizations.

Vision

Community-Researcher Partnerships: By working cooperatively, researchers and coastal communities can find ways for individuals to improve their livelihoods, for communities to develop inshore areas responsibly, and for society to solve environmental/resource management problems.

Small is Manageable: The Trust supports the concept of small-scale "do-able" projects, developed in response to coastal community needs.

International Linkages: Trust funds will be used to extend the projects and the partner participation of coastal community projects in Atlantic Canada (such as the Coastal CURA program based at Saint Mary's University) and beyond the Atlantic Canada region into overseas communities. The funds will also be used to bring individuals from abroad to Canada to learn from and contribute to coastal projects in the Atlantic Canada region.

Expected Outcomes

Canadian students will have the opportunity to work abroad with foreign researchers and coastal communities, generating concrete positive outcomes for both researchers and communities. Similarly, Non-Canadian students will have the opportunity to work in Canada.

Coastal communities outside Canada will be helped by the research of Canadian recipients to solve environmental, socio-economic, and coastal management problems, and to develop corresponding products and services. Similarly, coastal communities in Canada will be helped by the research of foreign recipients.



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