

## **Leona Dargis Bio 2011**

This Canadian award-winning college student is passionate about agriculture and life. Leona has struck a perfect balance in applying the time-honoured principles she learned within her farming family roots. Her parents, the late Jean & Joanne Dargis, taught their five daughters the powerful combination of education and enthusiasm in moving not only the agricultural industry forward but in truly living life to its' fullest.

Leona attended Olds College in Olds, Alberta to pursue a post-secondary education in agricultural business. When graduating with her Diploma in 2005, Leona was chosen as Valedictorian and Outstanding Student of the Year. She then continued her studies in Olds and graduated once more with a Bachelor of Applied Science – Agribusiness Major in 2007. Leona's dedication and commitment did not go unnoticed, and in 2006, she was the sole Canadian student bestowed the National Student Leadership Excellence Award through the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. "Leona personifies the energy, creativity, optimism and dedication that will lead and transform the agricultural industry," said Dr. H.J. (Tom) Thompson, Olds College President and CEO.

Without skipping a beat Leona's leadership role expanded from a provincial to national then international level. As a board member on the Canadian Young Farmers Forum, Leona developed a particular interest in travel and gaining global perspectives. Today she respectfully represents future young leaders from around the world as an elected Next Generation (NG) trustee for the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RASC) where she has the honour to work with Her Royal Highness Princess Anne.

Adding to her already busy schedule, Leona was recently awarded the prestigious Canadian Nuffield Scholarship. This two year study will give her access to the best practices around the world as she commits her time in researching the dynamics of 'Succession Planning and Diversification on the Family Farm (with a supporting focus on young farmers)'. Leona aims to create influential change within Canada's agricultural industry and has begun her study while visiting friends in New Zealand and Australia. Her upcoming travel destinations include the UK, Singapore, India, Brazil, Argentina and Zambia.

Leona lives with an outgoing and entertaining zest of life, her keynote presentations are as genuine as they are inspirational. She enjoys meeting people and listening to their stories. She encourages those around her to appreciate life and to always laugh in having fun.

"Life is a journey no doubt with many challenges; if we keep a positive attitude and thoroughly enjoy the small treasures given to us in life then I see a path lead with yellow bricks." says Leona.

