

# Final Conference Report

## “Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket”

### April 20-21, 2007

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## **“Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket” Simon Fraser University, April 20-21, 2007**

### **Conference Rationale & Goals:**

For the past few years there has been (and will continue to be over the long term), a drastic shortage of skilled trades workers in BC. There have been equally drastic efforts to meet it, including the recruitment of skilled tradesmen from Europe and South and Central America, but barely a word has been heard about training the huge potential workforce of women in the province. There is currently not a single support group for women in trades in BC, no lobbying effort on their behalf, and hearsay reported no increase in the numbers of women working in trades in BC since the 1980s. “Heresay” because the most recent research in this area was a report by the Amalgamated Construction Association of BC fifteen years ago, in 1992. The focus of this conference was not recruitment of new women but the retention of women already in trades, an opportunity – the first in many years – for them to meet and talk. It was thought that a possible result might also be the formation of new Women in Trades support groups, and conceivably, the lobbying of government and industry to encourage more women into trades. (By trades we mean primarily the construction trades such as electrical, carpentry, plumbing, sheet metal, welding, etc.)

There had not been a conference of women in trades in BC since 1993 although there was a national conference in 2000 in Banff and an afternoon event at BCIT in 2005.

When I was appointed the Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair in women’s Studies at SFU, the primary goal of my position was to coordinate a conference for BC and Yukon women in trades. I felt it was vital the conference be taken seriously in the trades community rather than as just an academic exercise. I was also worried about the intimidation factor of the “university” title for some tradespeople. I therefore invited Tamara Pongracz, Chief Instructor, Trades Access Program at BCIT, to co-sponsor the conference. The Trades Discovery Program for Women that Tamara teaches is the longest running pre-trades training program for women in the province and is well-known and well-respected. Tamara also has an extensive networking connection in the province that compliments my own.

I also felt it vital that the conference aim of addressing the lack of women in trades in BC & Yukon not be seen solely as either an industry or a union concern, but one equally important to both. (In hindsight, this concern was probably exaggerated.) However, for this reason we maintained a solely Woodward Chair/BCIT sponsorship in almost all promotional materials. In fact, major support was given this conference by the BC Construction Association (BCCA) through the efforts (particularly the fund-raising efforts) of its Vice-President, Abigail Fulton. This event would have been a far more modest affair, with fewer concrete results, without her and her organization’s significant support.

The SFU/BCIT conference was always intended to include women from Yukon Territory as well as BC and all promotional materials stated this. Unfortunately, with the exception of one student currently studying at BCIT in Burnaby, no Yukon women were able to come and because of the small numbers of women, Yukon statistics in the research study were also difficult to highlight.

### **Organization:**

**a) Funding:** In October a budget was drawn up and by early November it was clear traditional academic sources of funding would not be able to support such a non-traditional conference. Meetings with and telephone calls to other potential sponsors and donors began in late October. There was universal recognition of the value of such an event, and unanimous verbal support including from such unlikely allies as the BC Federation of Labour and the Business Council of BC. Several groups approached said they had thought about holding a similar event but none had yet put the thought into action. These groups included the BC Federation of Labour, the Aboriginal Community Careers Services Society (ACCESS) and the Women in Leadership Foundation.

Much of the late fall and early spring were spent in finding funding support and the extraordinary support of the BC Construction Association and in particular of Vice-President Abigail Fulton was vital in eventually finding more than sufficient funds to go ahead.

The importance of the issue of a skilled trades shortage (and women’s possible role in helping fill it) is evident in the breadth of support received. In addition to sponsorship by the Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair in Women’s Studies and by BCIT, final co-sponsors and event partners included: the BC Construction Association and the BC & Yukon Building Trades Council through a HRSD Committee (Service Canada); Province of BC Ministry of Economic Development; Province of BC Ministry of Community Services, Seniors’ and Women’s Issues; Worksafe BC; BC Safety Authority; Province of BC Industry Training Authority (ITA); Aboriginal Community Career and Employment Services Society (ACCESS); the Vancouver Aboriginal Strategic Employment Partnership Training Society (VANasep); Camosun College; Malaspina University-College; Women in Leadership Foundation; The Minerva Foundation; The Powerline Group; PCL Construction; and the YWCA. The conference was also supported by the BC Federation of Labour and the Business Council of BC.

**b) Schedule:** In November a call was put out for tradeswomen interested in planning the conference and a dozen women met at my house in January to brainstorm. They suggested a series of workshops and some useful follow-up suggestions. Rather than a final written publication, they felt what would be most useful to tradeswomen scattered very thinly over the province (and country) as a result of this conference would be a web site. (See Conference Results and Achievements, page 8.) The workshop topics suggested at that meeting were all presented at the conference, with only one addition (Cultural Challenges.) Tamara and I outlined an agenda and began confirming workshop facilitators and conference speakers and Abigail began fund raising. The first

organization to offer sponsorship was the Women in Leadership Foundation (President, Maya Kanigan). They suggested integrating our two goals by their sponsoring an early conference event. Regular organizing meetings were held by telephone or in person with Abigail, Tamara, Maya (later Karen, then Katie) of Women in Leadership Foundation, and myself. Regular meetings and email contact were also maintained with Mary Lynn Stewart, Women’s Studies Department Chair.

**c) Media, Design and Promotion:** All design work for the conference including dramatic-looking announcement postcards, posters and a website, were done by Carol Knight’s Design office at SFU Harbour Centre.

The conference web site ([www.sfu.ca/tradeswomen](http://www.sfu.ca/tradeswomen)) was not active until the beginning of March and this made recruitment for the conference more difficult. Extensive personal contact by Tamara, Abigail and me with unions and employers who we asked to forward conference information on to women who might be interested in attending, seemed to get little response in terms of registrations. It’s unclear whether this was because conference information was not actually being passed along, or because the women were unresponsive, or both. In the final two weeks before the conference, personal calls to tradeswomen suggested the women’s intense isolation was a major reason why they didn’t have the energy (or trust) to respond to a printed announcement. This in fact confirmed for us, the importance of a conference focused on retention.

Press releases were sent out by SFU (Public Affairs and Media Relations) and by BCIT at the beginning of April and announcements were placed in the newsletter of the BCCA and in *tradetalk*, the journal of the BC and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council. Media response was instant and intense. Radio, TV and print media responded, often with more than one story or article. Tamara, Abigail and Kate took turns being interviewed. Media coverage (mostly on Business pages) included the following:

*The Tyee* (on-line newspaper)  
*Vancouver Sun*  
*Vancouver Province*  
CKNW (Bill Goode Show and Nightline)  
Channel M (Multivision TV)  
SFU Radio  
*Chiliwack Times*  
*Nanaimo Daily News*  
CBC Afternoon Show (Radio One) and Daybreak (CBC Radio North)  
*Alaska Highway News*  
*Journal of Commerce*

Media interest has continued. Articles published since the conference include a cover photo and three full pages of coverage in *tradetalk* and articles in *Business in Vancouver*, the *Vancouver Sun*, *New Westminster Tri-City News*, *PeopleTalk* magazine and an

upcoming article in *Georgia Straight*. We were also highlighted by the Fort St. John “Northern Opportunities Program” that introduces people to trades.

Final registration for the conference was 59 people, most of them women (journeyed and apprentices) in trades.

### **Research Report:**

The last statistical study of women in trades in BC was Sharon R. Goldberg’s 1992 study, “Women in Construction: A Report on Access, Training and Retention in the Construction Trades” sponsored by the Employment Equity Committee of The Amalgamated Construction Association of B.C. and co-funded by Employment and Immigration Canada. The generosity of the Woodward Chair made it possible to hire a graduate student to produce an updated report on women in trades and trades training in BC and Yukon for presentation at the conference. Heather Mayer, a SFU History PhD student was hired to research and produce the report, co-written by Heather and Kate Braid. Because we wanted to have as broad a feedback as possible, a draft-only version of the report was presented at the conference opening on Friday, in order to give the Industry Training Authority (ITA) time to respond to our comments. The finalized report will be posted on the SFU Women’s Studies website and will possibly be published as the first of the department’s Occasional Papers.

### **Researchers’ Breakfast:**

Given the few resources in this field, and that this was a rare gathering of people interested in women into trades issues including a significant number of researchers, it was decided to hold a breakfast Friday morning, April 20, in order for researchers to meet and briefly inform each other of the work they have done and are currently doing. Hopefully this will prevent redundancy in future research. (For example, the question of “Barriers to women in trades” has been researched to death.) Present were: Joe Barrett, Researcher, BC & Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council; Marcia Braundy, tradeswoman activist and recent PhD graduate, UBC; Abigail Fulton, BCCA; Judy Harris, Government of BC Industrial Training Authority; Katie Loughlin, Women in Leadership Foundation; Hiromi Matsui, Canadian Construction Women; Heather Mayer, PhD student, SFU; Olaf Nielson, trades instructor, Camosun College; Valerie Overend, trades instructor, Saskatchewan Institute of Technology, and Women in Trades representative on the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and for Canadian Women in Construction; Tamara Pongracz, BCIT; and Vivian Price, California State University. Kate chaired the meeting.

### **Conference Agenda:**

On Friday April 20 at 10:00 p.m. at the SFU Segal Business Centre, the Researchers’ Breakfast convened. At 3:00 p.m. the Women in Leadership Foundation (WiL) Roundtable for Employers and a Focus Group of tradeswomen met separately to brainstorm problems and issues, then together, to suggest solutions. A summary of the WiL meetings is attached as Appendix D, p. 23.

At 5:00 p.m. the conference opened at the Segal Centre with a wine and hot hors d’oeuvres reception for members of the business, labour, academic and trades communities. Kate emceed the evening. It officially began at 5:45 with a welcome and brief history, then a blessing by Rose Point, a BCIT elder of Sto:lo/Thompson descent. There were several speakers: SFU Dean of Arts and Social Sciences Dr. John T. Pierce; Diana Miles from Worksafe BC; Minister Ida Chong from the BC Ministry of Community Services, Seniors’ and Womens’ Issues (who presented Abigail Fulton of the BCCA with a cheque for \$100,000 to initiate a STEP for Women program to help place women in construction, see Conference Results and Achievements, page 9); Manley McLachlan, President of the BCCA; Diana Miles, VP, Worksafe BC; and Dr. Vera Magee-Shepherd, Acting President of BCIT. Colin Hansen, Minister of Economic Development was also present.

The audience then moved to a larger space where Heather Mayer (SFU PhD student) presented the research report, and a panel of three tradeswomen: Judy Kujundzic (welder), Cynthia Haugen (electrician) and Dione Hencker (welder), spoke about their experiences as women in trades. The evening ended with dessert and coffee.

### **Workshops:**

Saturday opened with a light breakfast and keynote talk by Valerie Overend, Saskatchewan carpenter, trainer and women in trades representative on the Canadian Apprenticeship Form (CAF) and Canadian Women in Construction, on the “Start-up, Care and Maintenance of Your WIT Group.” Lunchtime speaker was Dr. Vivian Price, an electrician and filmmaker who teaches Interdisciplinary Studies at California State University at Dominguez Hills as well as film and gender studies at various colleges in the University of California system. Vivian showed parts of her film “Transnational Tradeswomen” and discussed its implications for Canadian women.

Over the course of the day the following workshops were presented and SFU and UBC students (most from Women’s Studies) were paid an honourarium to take notes in each workshop. The notes were later collated by Heather Mayer for this report. (See Appendix A, page 11, for a summary of each workshop.)

- What Red Seal? Navigating through apprenticeship under the Industrial Training Authority. Presented by Judy Harris, ITA researcher.
- Claiming the Territory. What would the ideal workplace look like? What would keep women on the job? Dealing with internalized sexism and other burning questions. Presented by Val Overend (carpenter) and Judy Kujundzic (welder).
- Dressing for Success, Comfort and Safety. Knowing what to wear, when and finding the equipment that fits. Betty-Ann Lee (sponsored by Worksafe BC).
- Snappy Comebacks. What to say when you’re speechless. Presented by Heather Tomsic, boilermaker, Safety, Security and Emergency Management Regulatory Training Services, Greater Vancouver Regional District.

- Alternatives to Grievance and Human Rights Complaints. Effective communication between men and women on the job. Presented by Elaine Alison (author, *The Velvet Hammer*, sponsored by PCL construction).
- Finding the Job and Keeping It. Practical tips and techniques for job search and job maintenance. Presented by Cheryl Anson (cabinetmaker, career advisor) and Judy Doll (carpenter, industrial arts teacher).
- The Business of Business. Starting and running your own company. Presented by Deb McIsaac (President, The Powerline Group), Nicki Trotter (carpenter, owner of HandyGals Home Service) and Jim Smyth (BCIT Ventures Program).
- Life After the Ticket: What Could Come Next? Options for staying in the trade longer, or for shifting to related fields. Presented by Michelle Laurie, electrician (President, IBEW Local 258), Gwen Williams, carpenter (City of Vancouver building inspector), Anne St. Eloi, plumber, pipefitter, gasfitter, teacher (United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, International office).
- Storytelling, or Making a Culture of Construction. Sit back and tell about your first day, your best/worst job, maybe write about it, make a film. Or just listen. Presented by Hilary Peach, welder.
- Learning Styles. Feeling stupid when you're the only one asking questions? Presented by Alice Macpherson (Kwantlen University-College).
- Men, Women and Tools. A discussion on resistance to equity initiatives. Presented by Dr. Marcia Braundy, carpenter (Journeywoman Ventures).
- Cultural Challenges. The things we can't change that can hold us back: race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation.... Presented by Meg Herweier (carpenter instructor, BCIT) and Helen Boyce (welder, Director of ACCESS Trades).

#### **Plenary and Recommendations:**

It was considered an important part of the event that the women in each workshop brainstorm recommendations that could be passed on to interested and relevant bodies (government, industry, unions, schools, support agencies, etc.). A final plenary was held at the end of the day in order to coordinate these suggestions, which follow in priority order.

1. From K-12, encourage early exposure of girls to the idea of trades work:  
i.e. tradeswomen speakers, after-school programs, counselors educated on the desirability of trades work, send students to job sites, etc. (44 votes)
2. Form a Women in Trades website (34 votes)
3. Form local Women in Trades (and Technologies) support groups (26 votes)

4. Provide free, fully funded apprenticeship training (21 votes)
5. Market the value of women trades workers to employers (making a business case for the competitive advantage of hiring women – safe, reliable, pay attention to detail, etc. (19 votes)
6. Increase the general visibility of tradeswomen (14 votes)
7. Assure adequate, accessible childcare and flexibility for parents in the workday (time off, workshare, etc.) (14 votes)
8. Urge employers to develop a strategic plan to recruit and train women, aiming for 15% women on every job (13 votes)
9. Institute employment equity on public construction projects (7 votes)
10. Create mentorship programs for tradeswomen (6 votes)
11. Acknowledge & recognize good employers (4 votes)
12. Present trades as an option for university students (3 votes)
13. Provide more leadership training for women (2 votes)
14. Make available more trades training in smaller communities (2 votes)
15. Make changes to the workplace culture, such as:
  - train journeypeople in how to instruct (1 vote)
  - change the idea that “you should suffer because I did” (1 vote)
16. Develop support systems and incentives (for example, when you’re laid off) to keep people in trades (1 vote)

The conference ended with a light supper and informal “talent show” with women singing and reading poems, some of them written in the Storytelling workshop.

**Evaluations:** Unfortunately, we didn’t ask for evaluations for individual workshops only the conference, and only 15 of these were returned. All were positive. See Appendix B for all evaluation comments.

**Concrete Results and Achievements:** This conference created some wonderful and very real opportunities for BC women in trades.

**1. STEP for Women:** At the Friday opening of the conference, with Colin Hansen, Minister of Minister Economic Development present, Minister Chong, Minister of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors’ and Women’s Issues, presented Abigail Fulton with a cheque for \$100,000 to fund a position to coordinate a Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP) for Women, working with BCCA members to place women in trades jobs around the province. The program will be a joint initiative of the BCCA and the Metis nation BC (MNBC). It will also develop a mentoring network for women across the industry.

A coordinator – Lindy Monahan – has been hired and begins work August 1, 2007. Lindy is a heavy equipment operator and cabinetmaker who most recently taught Joinery (cabinetmaking) at Okanogan College. Her address at BCCA is [lindy@bccassn.com](mailto:lindy@bccassn.com)

**2. Personal Contact:** Several young women at the conference reported they’d never before talked to another woman in a trade. They were excited to be able to exchange information, stories and advice. “I always thought these problems were just mine, because of me!” one excitedly reported. Another woman said, “I’ve been an electrician for 23 years and in that time I’ve only ever met one other female electrician. Today in this room there are five of us. It will take me a while to process this.” Several older tradeswomen were thrilled to meet the new generation, and the new generation repeatedly said how glad they were to meet the tradeswomen who’d inspired them into the industry in the first place.

**3. Web Site:** The suggestion of a web site to help women stay in touch was brought up at the first brainstorming meeting of tradeswomen, and was one of the priority recommendations of the conference.

Enough money was raised for this conference that Abigail Fulton and Lindy Monahan are now establishing a web site for BC women in trades, to be run out of the BCCA offices. Address will be: [www.bcconstructionwomen.com](http://www.bcconstructionwomen.com)

**4. Visible Images of Women:** For the conference plenary sessions and dining area, BCIT coordinated and funded a series of large coloured posters with pictures of tradeswomen (one per poster) at work. Women in hard hats and coveralls stand beside huge trucks, heavy machinery and workbenches, often with a tool in their hands. In sidebars they describe their work and talk about their favourite tool. A passion for the work shines through. The posters had such an impact on everyone who saw them that delegates, particularly teachers, asked for copies. BCIT has now produced a package of ten posters of tradeswomen “pin-ups.” The posters are sponsored by several construction companies including PCL and are available through Tamara Pongracz at [Tamara\\_Pongracz@bcit.ca](mailto:Tamara_Pongracz@bcit.ca)

**5. Media Education and Job Support:** Media, especially business pages, were particularly interested in the idea of women filling the gap in trade shortages. (“Why didn’t anyone think of this before?” one reporter asked.) The result was several articles, almost all featuring photographs of women working as plumbers, electricians, welders, etc..

As part of encouraging young people in general to enter trades, the ITA had already planned a promotion to highlight tradespeople who have been particularly successful. Partly as a result of our regular contact and extensive media coverage about women in trades coming out of the conference, Tamara Pongracz of BCIT was made one of the judges, and two of the twelve tradespeople eventually featured were women – an important part of encouraging other women to try trades work and of letting men know that this is acceptable. .

**6. Possible new trades training school for women:** One of the women invited to the conference but unable to come was JudyLynn Archer, President and CEO of Women Building Futures, a pre-trades training program for women in Edmonton that has had

remarkable success in the past five years. The school has a 95% success rate in training job-ready women who are snapped up by trades employers and immediately apprenticed for further training. After BC open-shop employers expressed their interest in having a similar school in this province, a meeting was convened on July 12, 2007 in Vancouver where representatives of the BCCA, BCIT, ITA, and BC Ministries of Economic Development and Seniors’ and Women’s Issues, met with JudyLynn to discuss the possibility of working together to start a similar school in BC. Kate chaired.

**7. Research Report:** An extensive study of the current status of women in trades and trades training in BC and the Yukon – the first since 1992 – was researched by SFU PhD. student Heather Mayer and co-written with me. The report will be posted on the SFU Women’s Studies website and will possibly be published as the first of the department’s Occasional Papers.

**8. Women in Trades Researchers’ Connection:** For perhaps the first time in Canada, researchers interested in women in trades issues came together for the purpose of meeting and pooling information on women in trades.

**9. On-going meetings of tradeswomen:** As a result of the conference, one of the young tradeswomen at the conference, Amy Harris, called a meeting of women interested in activities and mutual support. A preliminary meeting at BCIT was not well attended because of confusion over dates, but a fall meeting is being planned and all conference attendees will be informed. An email presence has been established at [W\\_I\\_T\\_T@hotmail.com](mailto:W_I_T_T@hotmail.com)

**10. Poetry:** Almost every woman in the Storytelling workshop wrote a poem, on the spot, about her work. These are being transcribed by Hilary Peach, the facilitator, into a small chapbook the women can keep or give as gifts.

## **Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket** **April 20-21, 2007**

### **Appendix A:**

## **Summary of Conference Workshops**

### **Saturday April 21, 2007**

**Keynote Address: The Start-up, Care and Maintenance of your Women in Trades (WIT) Group**  
Valerie Overend

Valerie introduced herself and gave a Power Point presentation on maintaining a Women in Trades group. She started by talking about why WIT groups start: for mutual support, to vent, talk about the craft, do projects. Where to find women? Unions, on the job. Where to meet? You can have potlucks at people’s houses, meet in bars, in union halls. Make sure it is somewhere where everyone is comfortable. Don’t rent a hall – offer in kind services instead. You can alternate social meetings and business meetings, and those not interested in business can come every other time. Besides social activities, you can decide if you want your WIT group to engage in outreach activities. To raise money, you can hold a home-repair workshop for women. The operating principles of the group come over time. It’s important that everyone have a voice, and everyone respects each others differences. Address conflict, try to come to a consensus. You can make up business cards with the WIT name on them and everyone fills out their own information. That way you can hand them out if you see a woman on a worksite. It is not necessary for your WIT group to incorporate, but some grants require that you do. Evaluate your activities, set goals.

### **Workshop 1: 10:15 to 11:15**

**Alternatives to Grievances and Human Rights Complaints**  
Elaine Allison, author *The Velvet Hammer*

The workshop focused on the ways men and women think and communicate differently. Most leadership manuals are written by and for men and the strategies they discuss do not usually work for women. Men play golf because they can discuss important issues without actually facing each other. Women like to face each other when discussing things, like sitting at a round table. The progress for women in leadership positions has been slow, but Elaine stressed that we are at a tipping point and we need to educate men on our vision and our needs.

According to MRI/PET scans, when men and women are performing tasks, typically only one hemisphere of men’s brains lights up, while for women, both do. This suggests that (generally speaking), men are more task focused and result oriented, they

follow an agenda. They want to get to the point. But women are multi-taskers; some companies prefer women because we take care of many things at one time. The problem is that women get resentful because we are doing everything. Even outside the job, we have to balance work and home duties.

Under stress men produce adrenaline. When women are stressed we produce oxytocin, the nurture/friend and befriend chemical. This suggests that men want to either fix the problem or leave it alone. Women want to talk about the problem, nurture and be nurtured, talk before trying to fix it.

### **Claiming the Territory**

Valerie Overend and Judy Kujundzic  
13 participants

Each woman was asked to name one thing they would improve about their workplace. Each improvement was labelled as Social, Physical, Emotional, Mental, Financial, or Other. Women named the following:

- 1) Being the only woman on the worksite (under a microscope)
- 2) Women drop out of shop classes between middle school and high school
- 3) No women’s restroom
- 4) Make more money than in traditional women’s jobs
- 5) More support for women in apprenticeship
- 6) More positive images shown to men about women in trades (men know they are the problem, but don’t know how to change. There are some objections to labelling men as the problem, some see it as a problem of workplace culture)
- 7) Lack of a national vision for women in trades
- 8) Conflict between labour and employers
- 9) Need for better communication
- 10) Competitive workplace culture
- 11) Preferential treatment for the “chosen few”
- 12) More recognition for value of work

Participants were then split into three groups and asked to imagine their ideal workplace.

#### **Group 1: Teachers**

- need more posters of tradeswomen of all ages
- full tool rooms, updated equipment
- a women’s locker room
- positive reinforcement on the job
- a mentorship program
- supportive colleagues
- a focus on green building
- more women hired as instructors

#### **Group 2: Employers, Associations, Advocates**

- a safe and clean worksite

- an information board
- safety equipment for women
- breaks
- benefits
- opportunities to upgrade skills
- good leadership from foremen
- humour
- team building
- tolerance
- trust
- employers who supports career advancement
- family involvement
- completion parties
- gender equity
- gender/cultural respect

### **Group 3: Tradeswomen**

- support and education to facilitate adaptation to the workplace
- a safe environment (physically and mentally)
- open, honest, supportive communication
- a culture of equity
- help available for physical tasks, willingly and without judgement
- periodic get-togethers with other tradeswomen
- respect for differences between men and women

### Recommendations:

- 1) Make a plan to market women to employers—making a business case that women are safe, reliable, etc.
- 2) Provide employers with resources and information on how to attract and keep female employees.

### **Learning Styles and their Influence on How We Learn**

Alice Macpherson, Kwantlen University College

14 participants

This workshop dealt with different learning styles, and how to find which works best for you. The participants were given a handout asking what they would do if given a tool they had never used before. The choices were:

- 1) Watch someone else operate it and ask questions
- 2) Read the operating manual and follow the directions
- 3) Try one thing, see what happens, and then use that information to try something else
- 4) Jump in, turn it on, and see what it can do

The participants were then divided into four groups according to their first choice of answer. They were asked to approach the piece of equipment and write down what you

would need and who you would approach to help you (the notes here are a little confusing). The groups then present their conclusions.

Alice then outlined Howard Gardner’s eight types of intelligence:

- 1) verbal linguistic: how you read, write, and speak
- 2) logical mathematical: how math and logic work on the mind
- 3) spatial mechanical: using graphics to interpret and understand
- 4) bodily kinesthetic: movement-related cognition
- 5) musical rhythmic: if you can’t hear what you’re working with, you can’t work in the trades; this is the sound-based faculty
- 6) interpersonal: in human relations, knowing who may be empathetic, and who won’t be
- 7) intrapersonal: considering how I think about things for myself; we’re always reflecting on others, but we have to also reflect on ourselves
- 8) naturalistic: not merely the environment; it’s an awareness of surroundings. This capacity is important for a woman in trades because she has to be cognizant of all factors around her.

Learning styles change as we get older. The participants discussed how to improve on the types of intelligence they are not as good at.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) There needs to be a greater awareness of learning styles and intrapersonal (self) awareness.
- 2) There needs to be a project or program on mentoring journeypeople in BC.
- 3) There needs to be a program on how to more effectively teach/instruct in the trades.

#### **Dressing for Success and Safety**

Betty-Ann Lee, Worksafe BC

This workshop previewed safety equipment designed especially for women, including hardhats, gloves, safety goggles, respirators, tool belts, and overalls. There is equipment made for women, but the problem is finding it. There are companies like Charm & Hammer where you can order off the Internet, but a proper fit is essential for safety equipment so it would be nice if there was a store dedicated to women’s work gear.

#### **What Red Seal? Navigating Through Apprenticeship**

Judy Harris, Industry Training Authority

This workshop began with an overview of the ITA. The ITA is like a government organization; it’s responsible for expanding and improving industry training.

There has recently been a huge increase in registered apprentices. The ITA is trying to turn management and responsibility for training back to the industry because industry knows what they need and want, they know the standards. Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) are incorporated bodies with their own board of directors. There are currently six ITOs, which encompass about 80% of trades workers in BC. The ITA is

developing new programs to give people advanced training and recruiting people at the high school level.

There is a trades shortage, and the emphasis has been on immigrants. Alberta is also trying to lure away BC’s workers to work in the oil industry. The ITA is going to spend \$105 million dollars in the next year, \$95 million of which will be going towards training. They are expanding training accessibility and flexibility. Mobile training units are concentrating on the northern part of the province. With online programs and night/weekend courses they are trying to make training as flexible as possible in order for people to complete training.

You are considered a trainee until you reach Level One completion, get a sponsor and begin working. In order to be certified, you must put in all of your hours, complete or successfully challenge all technical training levels, write the certification exam, and finally, be recommended as an apprentice for certification by your sponsor.

Recommendations:

1) The availability of seats at training institutions needs to be improved—earliest start date for some trades is 2010 at BCIT—not satisfactory, deters people from going into trades and makes it harder to plan for the future.

**Workshop 2: 11:30am to 12:30pm**

**Storytelling, or, Making a Culture of Construction**

Hilary Peach

This workshop began with a discussion of why women might want to put their work experiences into some kind of art form. The difference between theatre and therapy is that theatre is repeatable. Therapeutic act of discourse is one thing; but when you can repeat it, it becomes art.

If you are the only woman, your experience counts for a lot. Women in trades experience issues of invisibility and credibility. Making art out of our stories serves as verification that our experiences are real and legitimate. Collecting stories makes them into concrete objects. The burden of carrying the stories around inside ourselves is relieved. There are also political reasons for sharing stories, to help employers and male coworkers understand women’s experience.

There was a short writing exercise: “A story from my life at work, in three minutes or less.” Participants broke into groups of two or three, one person telling their story while the other(s) write it down, then they switch. They then shaped what the other person wrote of their story, took out unnecessary parts, listened to how the words flowed.

**Finding the Job and Keeping It**

Judy Doll and Cheryl Anson

9 participants

The workshop started with a handout on tips for writing cover letters and resumes. Resumes for trades work should be one page maximum, longer if applying for teaching or corporate positions. They suggest women highlight their willingness to work, their

skills, and where they wanted to work. On the “highlights” section of the resume, list the tools you can use, number of years of experience, relevant training, and your special talents. The courses you have taken are less important. Get letters of reference at the time of work or as soon as you leave a workplace. Write on the resume whether you have a drivers license (which class) as well as if you have a clean driving record. The cover letter is where you show your personality. Clearly list an objective and a trade. Look up the company’s history. This will impress the company and help you avoid a bad employer. You might want to mention that you show up on time every day in your cover letter. “Investment” is a good word to use, it shows that you acknowledge that the employer is investing money in your apprenticeship.

There was then a brainstorming session on where to look for jobs. Some examples: associations, unions, ads, friends and family, BCIT job boards, Canada Job Bank, Craig’s List. The group also discussed how to keep the job you have, such as keeping a positive attitude, having a support system, a tradeswomen’s website, and making friends on the job. The women shared experiences of discrimination on the job. Whether you try to or not, when a woman enters the workplace, the environment changes.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Have a positive attitude toward all workers, including yourself; having a positive attitude helps.
- 2) Don’t go above male coworkers in order to prove yourself to the group.
- 3) Need a WIT website where conversations and information transfer occur.

#### **Snappy Comebacks**

Heather Tomsic, Greater Vancouver Regional District

So what’s funny? Self-important delusionists, people who think they have their lives under control, or who think that certain people should do certain things. There are givens, gimmies: everyone is born, eats, sleeps, ages, and will die. Heather asks the group how many of the above do we think we have under control? If you say yes to at least one, then there’s lots of material for humour.

Humour is how we laugh at ourselves with other people. Laughter is stress-busting, it’s as necessary as breathing. It’s a shared recognition of our own fragility. Humour resists injustice, it says, I’m not gonna play your game by feeling bad, and it finds ways to enjoy your discomfort. It sees the ludicrous for what it is.

When not to use humour:

- 1) When you think that the verbal attack has intent
- 2) When personal harm is possible—don’t waste your time
- 3) In cases of human rights infringements—the employer needs to hear it

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Go to high schools, talk about your experience. This helps younger generations identify with you. It’s funny how every generation of women think they’re doing it first. Educate yourself and others, you don’t have to be an expert speaker.

## 2) Form a Women In Trades group

### **Lunchtime Keynote Address: Transnational Tradeswomen**

Vivian Price

Vivian introduced her film *Transnational Tradeswomen*, about women working in construction trades in Asia. The focus of the film is on the arbitrary gendering of work, and how globalization and mechanization affect workers in different places. She points out that in the global North, women choose to work in trades. In the global South, they do so out of necessity. In developing countries, mechanization usually means getting rid of the jobs done by women. Vivian emphasized that women need an international consciousness and a strong labour movement.

### **Workshop 3: 1:45pm to 2:45pm**

#### **The Business of Business**

Deb McIsaac, The Powerline Group  
Niki Trotter, HandyGals Home Service  
Jim Smyth, BCIT Venture Programs

Deb: Flexibility and balance are the keys to owning your own business. Everyone has their own way to run a business, figure out what works best for you. Take a business course, try to learn as much as you can about operating a business. The reputation of your business is your most important resource. Treat your employees well.

Niki: Her business mostly does small jobs in homes for female clients. Her father helps her with accounting, and she suggests having friends or relatives help you where they can. She had to learn customer service skills. She warns against taking on too much work. If you tell clients there is a waiting time, often they will wait for you.

Jim: Explained some of the programs at BCIT on starting your own business.

#### **Life After the Ticket: What Could Come Next?**

Michelle Laurie, President IBEW258  
Gwen Williams, Building Inspector, City of Vancouver  
Anne St. Eloi, Special Representative, UA  
16 attendants

Anne began with her story. She began as a plumber and has worked at many jobs, including: job supervision, teacher and mentor, local union officer, recruiter for the skilled trades, benefit administrators, and international union officer. She emphasized that women need to recruit other women, to set an example. They also need to recruit men who respect women. Anne showed a video on the Helmets to Hardhats program she helped develop, which encouraged people in the military to enter apprenticeship after service.

Gwen followed and told the group about her career path from carpenter to owner of her own business, to designing a home improvement program for women on income assistance, to being a building inspector with the City of Vancouver.

Michelle then told the group about her experience. She began as truck driver in a mine, and then moved into electrical. She was involved in union negotiations, then became a union organizer in manufacturing, and then a Workers Compensation Board representative. She ran for president of her union local, and won. She is also an officer in the BC Federation of Labour and on the national board of United Way.

One of the participants asked each woman if she had to create her own opportunities or if they came to her, and all answered that the opportunities had primarily come to them. They all recommended taking leadership training and learning public speaking skills.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Early exposure to trades for young women.
- 2) Increased visibility of successful tradeswomen.

### **Men, Women and Tools**

Marcia Braundy, Carpenter

Marcia began with a brief discussion of the challenges women face getting into the trades. She showed a 17 minute play that was the centerpiece of her PhD dissertation titled “Men, Women and Tools.” The play emerged from a group interview with four tradesmen and a journeylevel woman carpenter, who met to explore what is underneath male resistance to women in trades and technology. In the play, men talk about women as property.

Women discussed their reactions to the play. Some stressed that it’s not fair for women to always expect the men to change. Another pointed out that women need to stand up for themselves on the job. One woman brought up the importance of understanding gender socialization at an early age. There was also a discussion about not necessarily expecting a kind of kinship with other women on the job.

### **Cultural Challenges**

Helen Boyce, ACCESS

Meg Herweier, BCIT Carpentry Instructor

The first part of this workshop focused on ACCESS, a training program for urban Aboriginals, then Meg spoke. Helen referred to a research program undertaken to examine barriers to women in the construction industry, which found that women attributed the discrimination they faced to their gender, not their race. Cultural backgrounds can affect interest in trades. Parents may direct their children towards business or education. There is a stereotype that people who go into the trades couldn’t make it in the academic world. Women need to be stubborn, and have a passion for a trade in order to succeed. Women also face self-imposed challenges. Women cannot expect people to know when they have crossed a boundary, they need to point it out. Take a break if things at work are too much to handle. You need to maintain a balance between loyalty to your trade and loyalty to yourself. Cultural challenges don’t have to be negative—they can help you develop character. Under every challenge is an opportunity.

## **Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket** **April 20-21, 2007**

### **Appendix B:**

#### **Conference Participant Evaluations**

##### **1. What did you like most about the conference?**

- Being able to connect with other women in the trades and to learn of their experiences.
- So many amazing tradeswomen, I loved everything about the conference...extremely well organized.
- The opportunity to find out more about women in trades, see the support available/unavailable in Vancouver
- Sharing stories
- The practical tips in “Finding the Job and Keeping It.”
- Finally meeting others and recognizing just how much the feelings of being a minority exist in the women in trades.
- The variety of younger women.
- Meeting such a variety of women.
- Meeting new women.
- The women!
- Networking with other women in trades.
- Great inspiring women! So happy to have come.
- Meeting a whole new group of women like me. Getting info on becoming educated in building my business.
- What I liked most was honestly, just being there. This is my first women in trades conference and it makes me really excited to get out in the industry.

##### **2. What did you like least about the conference?**

- That the sessions were rushed.
- I loved my two hour workshop but I really would have preferred two different one-hour workshops so I could maximize my experience and exposure to topics and social interactions.
- Topics could be more in-depth, detailed, more focused.
- Workshops were too short.
- Some workshops were not interactive enough. Less talk, more action.
- More air-time for participants.
- That I couldn't participate in more than three topics.
- Nothing.
- I would like to attend more courses.

- Information on grants for paying for conference. (*NB This was available on the web site.*)
- Workshops too short, not enough time to ask questions, comment and meet other participants.
- I found the plenary for recommendations a bit long but the information was important. I just don't like to sit so long!

**3. In what ways could this conference be improved:**

- Get more women out to support this.
- A three day conference.
- All awesome.
- Seems the opportunity to really connect with a younger group was missed. Our struggles have changed over the years, the attitudes and approaches must change.
- The people who came could be heard more. It seems a few people know each other and that's who gets heard. I'd hoped to have an opportunity to be heard but mostly the opportunity was to listen.
- Give people a chance to meet as a group (eg. Electricians) so questions and experience can be discussed casually; especially good for the new apprentices to interact with people who've spent a long time in their chosen trade.
- Include a session on women's career paths and how they differ from men's. Invite high school counselors.
- Better advertising in advance.
- More media and information about the conference. We also need interesting workshops on leadership and leadership techniques for women in trades.
- A full weekend.
- A conference every year or at least every second year.
- Every one or two years instead of eleven!
- Workshops too short, not enough time to ask questions, comment and meet other participants.
- I can't think of anything I'd like to improve. It was great!

## **Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket** **April 20-21, 2007**

### **Appendix C:**

#### **Recommendations for future conferences**

Results of a debrief session held after the conference and attended by: Kate Braid (SFU Woodward Chair), Tamara Pongracz (BCIT), Roberta Rogers and Lisa Siew (SFU, Woodward staff)

##### **What Worked:**

- Partnership with BCCA, BCIT and SFU and numerous other sponsors that led to a wide variety of concrete achievements including the \$100,000 grant announced at the Friday opening, for a tradeswoman advocate, based in the BCCA.
- Fundraising by Abigail at BCAA that made the conference more pleasant and made it possible to have a follow-up web site. (Feedback included comments that women appreciated good food and conference space.)
- Promotional postcards worked well. Were eye-catching and easy to store in a pocket or lunch bucket, could be mailed without need for envelope.
- Using “skilled trades shortage” as a “hook” for media led to extensive and on-going media coverage, even after the conference ended.
- Women were extremely happy to be together. Some had never talked to another tradeswomen, or had never met more than one woman in their trade, before this day.
- Both keynote presentations worked well; Valerie’s presentation on starting up a WIT group was very practical and Vivian Price’s video, *Transnational Tradeswomen*, was popular as a look at trades and blue collar women in other countries.
- Worked well to have each attendee introduce herself, both at plenaries and in workshops.

##### **Recommendations for Future Planning:**

- Need more time. Establish a planning schedule that secures funding, facilities, and speakers six months prior to the event, and five months prior, start advertising and registration.
- Revise registration fee – have different levels:
  - \$20: Participants with grants/Unemployed
  - \$25: Apprentices
  - \$75: Journeypersons
  - \$125: External/Other
- Extend length of conference: two days?
- Offer childcare on site or childcare subsidy
- Offer follow-up event – recruitment event?
- Offer the conference in March and look to have March provincially declared as BC Tradeswomen’s Month
- Offer early bird and regular registration fees
- Plan and organize for onsite and last minute registrations

**Recommendations for Recruitment:**

- Set up the website earlier and establish links to other associations, colleges, Ministry of Advanced Ed. etc.
- Establish earlier connections with other organizations (eg. Automobile Association, CN Rail, manufacturing, mechanical, aviation, ITA) who might be able to publicize with their members who hire women
- Investigate how to access tradeswomen in the north
- Consider broadening the conference to include tradeswomen as well as some or all of: blue collar women, technicians, emergency workers, etc.
- Find a way to encourage more participation from employers and labour (this would bring a wider range of women, and more buy-in from industry and unions)

**Recommendations for Workshops:**

- Provide evaluations for each workshop
- Workshop length: increase from 1 hour to 1.5 or 2 hours
- We tried a new approach to dealing with on-site relations by asking Elaine Allison (author of “The Velvet Hammer”) to talk about male/female methods of interaction, brain research, etc.. This wasn’t exactly what women needed, or they needed to hear it from a blue collar woman who could use workplace examples, but it holds real potential to support women in the same ways that “Snappy Comebacks” and “Assertiveness Training” do. Perhaps someone who does conflict resolution?

**Recommendations for Friday Public Event:**

- Tie the conference launch to other events such as the Skills Canada Competition, International Women’s Day, migrant workers and/or other women’s organizations
- Find a way to encourage more participation from employers and labour, as a way to encourage awareness
- Have registration for this event and make up name badges and a check-off list
- Panel worked well but could also organize this event around a lecture or movie (eg. Vivian’s movie: *Transnational Tradeswomen*)
- Videotape the Friday event (eg. Working TV)

**Other Items:**

- BCIT Tradeswomen Posters/Images were hugely popular and set off a request for more images of tradeswomen – BCIT will act as contact and take care of requests for these posters
- Tradeswomen Website – this initiative is already in process in connection with the new BCCA Project Manager position. Address will be: [www.bcconstructionwomen.com](http://www.bcconstructionwomen.com)
- Notes from “Care of your WIT Group” will be put into electronic format by BCIT to be made available online (Tradeswomen’s website, CCWESTT site, Women in Leadership, etc.)

## **Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket** **April 20-21, 2007**

### **Appendix D:**



## **Women in Leadership Foundation**

### **Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket** **Roundtable and Focus Group Results** **Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007** **SFU Segal Graduate Centre for Business**

#### **Introduction**

In early 2007, the Women In Leadership Foundation (WIL) initiated a labour market project in British Columbia through major funding from Service Canada.

The objective of this collaborative research project is to increase the internal human resource capacity of employer partners to meet their current and future human resource supply demands for the construction/trades industry. As a result of this project, local employers will receive a strategic plan to attract and retain more women in the construction/trades industry.

As part of the Tradeswomen: A Winning Ticket conference, hosted by SFU, BCIT and BCCA, WIL held a roundtable comprising of employers and educators as well as a focus group comprising of tradeswomen, after which a combined roundtable of all stakeholders was held. The following are the results from the separate and combined sessions held on Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from 3:00-5:30pm at the SFU Segal Graduate Centre for Business.

#### **Objectives**

- ❖ Bring industry stakeholders together to facilitate communication
- ❖ Discuss issues surrounding recruiting and retaining women in the construction industry
- ❖ Brainstorm solutions to these issues

#### **Key Questions**

- ❖ What challenges to recruiting women/female apprentices in the construction industry, for employers, do you know or perceive to exist?

- ❖ What challenges to retaining women in the construction industry, for employers, do you know or perceive to exist?
- ❖ What are some understandable, useable and realistic solutions for recruiting and retaining more women in the construction industry to address BC's current labour shortage?

## Summary of Findings

1. Tradeswomen rarely, if ever, get the chance to meet with employers, or even with each other, and discuss issues surrounding women in trades. The sense from both sides was that more opportunities for discussion need to take place in neutral and solution-driven environments.
2. The issues surrounding women in trades still exist from over 30 years ago, and little progress has been made in terms of increasing the number of women working in trades. It is still below 5%. Reasons for this stem from the reality of the construction industry, ie: discrimination in hiring and jobsite environment, lack of support and mentorship for apprentices, lack of awareness of trades for young girls, and lack of leadership from employers.
3. Perhaps the biggest problem in recruiting and retaining more women is not necessarily the supply, but the difficulty in obtaining the qualifications for an apprenticeship and lack of attachment to the workplace.
4. Three words summarize the solutions/recommendations to all of the issues listed on page 6: **Awareness, Communication and Leadership.**
  - The construction industry needs:
    - To create awareness for young girls, parents and school counselors about careers in trades
    - To provide more opportunities for communication and bridging between labour and employers
    - To offer skill building, such as leadership and management, for tradeswomen, tradesmen and employers
    - To reward employers for leadership efforts in diverse HR practices

## Results from the Roundtable

Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007

3:00-4:00pm

*Notes from Katie Laughlin and Joanna Sum*

Terry Mayo	EllisDon Construction
Valerie Overend	SIAST
Hiromi Matsui	SFU Applied Sciences
Manley McLachlan	BCCA
Randy Callaghan	PCL
Kelly Knister	Camosun College
Alison Bowe	Camosun College
Conny-Maud Groenvelt	BC Hydro
Judy Harris	ITA
Victoria Pazukha	Craftcentre
Patrick Waunch	Rambow Mechanical
Cindy Pelletier	D&G Mechanical

**Total attendance: 12**

### Issues with recruiting and retaining women in Construction:

- ❖ Disconnect between apprentices/training and the employer, mentoring, bridging the gap, transitioning of students to jobsite
- ❖ Image/Reality of the industry/ Old Boys Club
- ❖ Education/Transition/Career Counseling of what's available to women, lack of awareness to young girls that trades are a viable career
- ❖ Stereotyping/Perception of women on jobsite
- ❖ Current practices need to be more inviting
- ❖ Cultural and social aspect of construction
  - Most of BC's employers are small
  - Where do we focus our attention?
- ❖ Lack of interest to change the environment/perception of women, lack of employer commitment to retaining women
- ❖ Lack of individual recognition
- ❖ Pay equity/diversity of work/ good working environment
- ❖ Discrimination of hiring practices
- ❖ Intimidation on and of, the worksite
- ❖ Lack of follow up/feedback between employee and employer
- ❖ Lack of leaders at all levels to examine their HR practices

Problem is not lack of supply, but lack of qualifications to get into an apprenticeship and lack of ability for attachment to the workplace

**Results from the Focus Group**  
**Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007**  
**3:00-4:00pm**

***Notes from Jasmine Jawanda and Natalie Schrieber***

Kate Stewart	Tradework Training Society, Journey Carpenter
Hilary Peach	Welder
Judy Kujundzik	Welder
Betty Buchar	Electrician
Marcia Braundy	Carpenter
Julie Sawatsky	Trades Consultant
Kathy Thom	Carpenter, Instructor BCIT
Cynthia Haugen	Journey person
Dione Hencker	Welder
Vivian Price	Electrician, Professor Univ. of California
Susanne Davis	Carpenter/Longshore
Alice Brown	Electrician

**Total Attendance: 12**

**Issues with recruiting and retaining women in Construction:**

- ❖ Hours of work- if you have children, early morning or evening work is difficult
- ❖ Lack of daycare, or hours of daycare matching hours of work, long hours, no support for work/life balance
- ❖ Women are intimidated to network in order to find work after their apprenticeship, it comes more easily for men, women don't know how to negotiate salaries
- ❖ Bearing children is a deterrent for employers, wary that woman will leave job
- ❖ Resistance to hiring women because they never have, inexperience in hiring women therefore not enough doors open for women
- ❖ Lack of hands-on, paid training
- ❖ Lack of education at high school level, girls not encouraged into non-traditional careers
- ❖ Lack of comprehensive apprenticeship training system in this province
- ❖ Waiting list for training is 2 years, deters women from serious consideration for trades
- ❖ Women need to be comfortable using tools even before starting apprenticeship, i.e.: lack of basic skills
- ❖ Men and women are treated differently in apprenticeship training programs
- ❖ Lack of awareness on how to get funding for training
- ❖ Lack of awareness of the ins and outs of unions
- ❖ Lack of mentorship from other women, lack of mentors period, not enough encouragement

- ❖ Lack of opportunity for jobs, i.e.: communication to women about what jobs are available and where
- ❖ Image of construction for young women
- ❖ Pay equity (except with union work)
- ❖ Employer mentality of women
- ❖ Women are hard to find to employ!
- ❖ Lack of support at training level from employers
- ❖ Sexual harassment, lack of support when personal space is violated
- ❖ Lack of professional training for women so that they know their rights and can be assertive: wages, safety, human rights
- ❖ Lack of equity in hiring policies
- ❖ Old boys network
- ❖ Power struggle, men fear that women will take away their jobs
- ❖ Men are ashamed when women outwork them
- ❖ Territorialism, perceived proprietorship, male entitlement
- ❖ Perspective is always framed as the “women’s problem”
- ❖ Need for workplace training on ethics and best practices, make absolutely clear what is accepted and what is not, to eliminate fear of coming forward which may jeopardize their job and cause friction with fellow employees- this goes for men too as there is harassment between men, there is a climate of harassment and hostility that exists that has not been resolved
- ❖ Assertiveness training for women apprentices has gone out the window
- ❖ Need to change culture to fairness, not silence

**Results from combined Roundtable and Focus Group  
Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
4:00-5:00pm**

***Notes from Jasmine Jawanda, Natalie Schrieber and Joanna Sum***

**Total Participants: 26** (Kate Braid and Tamara Pongracz joined combined group)

**Ideas/Recommendations to recruiting and retaining more women in construction:**

- ❖ Promote trades as “Earn as you Learn”
- ❖ Find ways to fund women’s apprenticeship programs
- ❖ Have unions and companies invest in their workforce, ie: pay for training like the U.S. does
- ❖ Create women friendly companies, give awards to companies hiring the most women, make a big deal out of it
- ❖ Anti-harassment/ Anti-bullying initiatives, clear harassment policies and what the consequences are if these policies are violated AND/OR appropriate leadership and management skills training for employers to be able to enforce a policy, make sure women and men are actively learning on the worksite and realize that women have valuable skills to offer
  - Comment was made that the harassment issues will dissipate once more women enter the trades and the jobsites because it’s harder to pick on a group of women as opposed to one.
- ❖ More communication, respect, honesty, commitment between labour and employer
- ❖ Promotional material requirements
- ❖ Better inform high school counselors about trades
- ❖ Senior workers who are retiring could potentially become trade/apprenticeship counselors, except they may not have the right attitudes towards more women entering the trades
- ❖ Consider changing the language we use regarding harassment and how we talk about the issue, perhaps to “bullying”
- ❖ Mandatory training sessions for employees

## **Results from Roundtable and Focus Group Feedback Survey Sent on Sunday, April 22<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Responses to date: 13**

**Question #1: Why did you participate in this session?**

**Answer:** Most respondents replied that either they were asked by someone to participate and/or had vested interest/concerns surrounding issues relating to attracting and recruiting more women.

**Question #2: What is your role in the Construction Industry? Employer, educator/trainer/counselor or Tradesperson?**

**Answer:** Over 60% were either Tradesperson and/or educator/trainer/counselor.

**Question #3: How many years of experience do you have in the construction industry?**

**Answer:** Over 50% had 10-20 years experience, 23% had 20+ years.

**Question #4: Were you satisfied with the overall organization, participation and outcomes of the session?**

**Answer:** 69% answered NO.

**Question #5: If you answered “NO”, how can we improve for our next sessions?**

**Answer:** 1) It was frustrating that the room for focus group was so much smaller (and was short chairs) than the roundtable room which added to the “us” and “them” dynamic. 2) The facilitators were not knowledgeable on the issues surrounding women in construction. 3) There was not enough time for discussion in the combined group, ie: one hour is too short. 4) There were too much back and forth complaints rather than brainstorming of solutions.

*Comment: There were only supposed to have been 9 tradeswomen in the smaller room, which seats 10. Three women showed up that had not been invited, or who WIL did not know had been invited, and of course we didn't want to turn them away.*

**Question #6: Did you learn anything from this session? If so, what?**

**Answer:** Majority realized that there are many issues surrounding recruiting and retaining more women and that there needs to be more opportunity for communication between labour and employers in order to find solutions to these issues. Many noted that the image of women in trades has not changed much and that there is a lack of info about trades available for youth.

**Question #7: Was the size of the session appropriate?**

**Answer:** Over 50% said there were just enough participants.

**Question #8: Please list some usable and realistic solutions to recruiting and retaining women in order to address the current labour shortage in BC:**

**Answers:**

- ❖ Make counselors, school officials and younger grades aware about careers in construction

- ❖ Find money for TV ads to promote women in trades and provide female role models for girls.
- ❖ Re-evaluate current apprenticeship system in BC
- ❖ Have an independent Trades Ombudswoman who travels to work sites and investigates the conditions/environments in which women are working and addresses conflicts and concerns.
- ❖ Initiate an education program that is committed to communicating to all parties (tradeswomen and men, management, supervision, union reps) that the onus is on the employers and male employees to create a fair and safe work environment, and NOT solely on women to fit in.
- ❖ Focus on what is right instead of what is wrong
- ❖ Employers take the lead and initiative to actively recruit tradeswomen.
- ❖ Visible and active mentoring of other tradeswomen in industry, sharing of knowledge and survival skills learned through their ability to have retained themselves in industry.
- ❖ Affirmative action
- ❖ Implement government level respectful workplace awareness.
- ❖ Employers set up women friendly worksites, and implement policies to ensure a safe worksite
- ❖ Organize workplace practice for women with some experience and/or lack of training
- ❖ Recognize achievements and promote accordingly
- ❖ To provide workplace communication training
- ❖ Work with BC Construction Association to support liaison between industry and workers
- ❖ Make construction an attractive and interesting place to work for young women coming out of high school
- ❖ Make apprenticeship training free
- ❖ Government contracts need to have women and minority quotas over the 15%

**Question #9: Would you be willing to host a roundtable involving labour (students and trades people) and employers over the next four months?**

Answer: 8 people out of 13 said yes.