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- Questioned whether we are meeting the education needs of women to prepare them for employment;
- Economy provides part-time, contract or self-employment work; but women want and need full-time work; Cautioned that training for non-existent jobs breeds cynicism
- Self-employment requires a combination of the most complex skills and may not be the best entry vehicle to the labour market for new entrants or returnees
- Courses developed for and delivered specifically to women are very effective because as well as training women, they increase self-confidence
- Discrimination exists in the home, workplace and in government policies, but education can provide real possibilities for social change
- Women are still pulled between the sometimes contradictory demands of home and workplace
- Girls interest in math and science remains low and this will influence their future opportunities in the labour market
- In preparing for today's presentation, sought the issues of other Kootenay Women's Centres:
 - Golden: Women must leave home for education, take low-paying jobs or receive social assistance; women are poor
 - Cranbrook: Child custody decisions force women to remain in community where they have few opportunities, so absent father can have access
 - Elk Valley: Lack of services: a one-stop centre is needed; inappropriate referrals are made for training when other skills are needed EG literacy
- Gender-based analysis can be used to develop fair access to services; Fernie's Women Centre has developed "A Workbook for Creating Equitable Results" to assist small service providers to put this into practice

Handouts:

Speaking notes for presentation.

A Workbook for Creating Equitable Results: A Simplified Guide to Gender-based Analysis,
Compiled and Distributed by Fernie Women's Centre, January, 1999.

Questions & Comments:

- In a small community, what should women be training for? Not one *right* answer, but women who need the service have the answers
- A careful bottom-up process as well as time, patience and resources are needed
- Distance education is still difficult
- ITAC has been developing links with high-tech employers and looking at alternative training methods e.g. bringing training modules to the community and involving "live" trainers to make distance education more effective

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BY JOANNE SHOVELLER

Westerners doing business in China must first understand the ways of the East. The relationship's the thing, as the author points out.

AWPI Employer Toolkit

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Digital Equipment of Canada Ltd.

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Vice-President Administration and Human Resources, University of Toronto



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Fernie Women's Resource and Drop-In Centre

Women, Education and Employment

To the

Women's Education Training Coalition Meeting

December 3, 1999

- Overviews of the impact of globalization on women
- Pressures put on women to conform to training that doesn't suit them
- Contradictory demands placed on women
- Education can make a difference but requires some revision
- Examples of factors leading to positive outcomes for women
- Regional realities:
 - Golden reports
 - Lack of advanced education
 - Barriers to prevent women from accessing training
 - Low paying jobs and fierce competition is affecting women
 - Women are putting up with abuse on the job because they are desperate
 - Women are poor and vulnerable
 - Cranbrook reports
 - Justice system, child custody decisions prevent women from seeking employment and education
 - Elk Valley reports
 - Lack of services
 - Difficulty in accessing services in regional centres
 - Clients referred to inappropriate services
 - One stop centre needed
- Education revision requires the efforts of many people and resources as well as careful bottom-up planning, organization, commitment and patience.
- Gender – based analysis is a tool to assist

Ruth Beck, Employment Equity Coordinator, West Kootenay Women's Association,
420 Mills Street, Nelson, BC V1L 4R9, (250)352-9916, rbeck@netidea.com

- West Kootenay Women's Association is looking at ways to effect systematic change to improve the employment equity situation in the region, and have therefore been developing strategic partnerships with organizations who have a long-term commitment to employment equity, including HRDC
- Objective is to develop local resources and build networks, by sharing employment equity best practices, meeting one-to-one with employers and unions,
- Focus areas: assisting Columbia Basin Power Projects to develop comprehensive EE policy; sharing information and developing links among employers, unions, managers etc.; improving HR management to keep youth in the community; advocacy for related issues; construction projects; funding research
- Success will require an alliance between community and government, and therefore pleased that rural women have been invited to today's forum
- Recommended BC Human Rights website and a number of publications:
 - The BC Human Rights Commission website
<http://www.bchrc.gov.bc.ca/>
 - Trevor Wilson, Diversity at Work: The Business Case for Equity. John Wiley & Sons, Toronto.
 - Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative: Employer Toolkit. 1998.
 - *Diversity in the Workplace*, Ivey Business Journal, September/October 1999

Handouts:

Speaking notes.

Employment Equity and Poverty, a memo to Ruth Beck from Krista James, The Advocacy Centre, 501 Front Street, Nelson, BC V1L 4B4.

**West Kootenay Women's Association – Employment Equity Project
Project Direction and Proposed Action Steps**

Initial Funding and Mandate

2 year project funded by Status of Women Canada to effect systemic change to improve the employment equity situation in the West Kootenay region.

Structure

Employment Equity Project Coordinator – Ruth Beck

Steering Committee – 3 members, representing the WKWA and Kootenay WITT

Advisory Committee – 22 members, community-based, members sit as individuals
male and female participation, diverse group

Strategic Approaches

- make the most effective use of resources by developing strategic partnerships with existing institutions that have employment equity as a long term commitment
- raise awareness of employment equity issues, where and when appropriate
- provide accessible, good quality, practical resources and information
- create a locus of expertise in employment equity in the region

Priority Focus Areas

1. Columbia Basin Trust
 - Columbia Basin Power Projects
 - Assisting the Trust to develop a comprehensive approach to EE internally
 - Policies, practices, spending priorities
 - Training, education and awareness building
2. Employers, unions, managers, professional associations, municipalities, apprenticeship commission, government ministries etc.
 - Research
 - Proven, practical models of employment equity programs, policies etc.
 - Who's doing what in the region
 - Identified needs and gaps in the region
 - Success stories and role models
 - Communication to Public and Key Audiences – “selling the benefits & successes”
 - Media
 - Special publications – e.g. Labour Mkt. Review, association newsletters etc.
 - Information sheets

- Information clearinghouse
 - Potentially develop Web page – in partnership
 - Potentially have a 1-800 number – in partnership
 - Employment equity training – in partnership
 - Identify needs and potential audience during research
 - Include “train the trainers”
 - Partner funding for this segment of the project
3. Youth and Educators – school districts, Selkirk College, youth organizations
- Research
 - Who’s doing what and entry points into the system – e.g. CAPP, BCTF, Youth Centres etc.
 - Identified needs and gaps
 - Key people
 - Develop sustainable strategies to meet needs
 - Seek funding, as needed
4. Advocacy for Related Issues
- Liaise with key agencies to identify how WKWA can integrate messages into its employment equity work and to identify any specific advocacy/education actions
 - Childcare – West Kootenay Family and Childcare Services
 - Barriers to training for low income women – Advocacy Centre
5. Construction Projects
- Columbia Power Corporation (see CBT)
 - Kootenay Ferry Builders
 - Identifying other major projects expected for the region (and skills needs)
6. Funding Research:
- Columbia Basin Trust
 - HRDC
 - Rural Partnerships
 - Corporate
 - Other
- Additional Potential Opportunity:
- Co-author a paper on the links between employment equity and health
-

**Karla Hennig, Terrace Women's Centre, 4542 Park Avenue, Terrace, BC V8G 1V4,
(250) 638-0228, kjh@kernode.net**

- Results of Need Assessment by Terrace Women's Centre:
 - childcare
 - housing
 - education and training in job skills, job search and life skills
 - counselling services
 - transportation
 - employment
- While this Needs Assessment was done in 1991, indications are that these are probably much the same today
- Survey (1993) identified three main obstacles:
 - Scheduling and curriculum conflicts (e.g. family obligations, societal expectations)
 - Lack of support systems (funding for training if not eligible for income assistance or EI, inappropriate skill level for example, literacy);
 - Lack of information (print advertising is a problem for people with low literacy)
- If training is delivered in modules then women who must miss sessions do not have to miss a whole semester
- Lack of long-term planning on the part of funders is a problem when programs have to be delivered in a matter of months
- For training to be successful it needs to be flexible (therefore the power of people in the field needs to be increased) and needs to deal with pressures in the home when women retrain
- Limited opportunities: Jobs are going South
- Should we be training women for low paying positions? How many superhosts do we need?
- Should we support entrepreneurial training when often self-employment requires work not conforming to labour standards with no employment insurance, and may merely hide the number hours and the level of poverty
- Rural women face additional problems: EG vast distances to travel, poor roads, the need to leave home for training or jobs

Handouts:

Speaking Notes.

Charlynn Toews for the Terrace Women's Resource Centre, What Works: women Overcoming Barriers to Training and Education in Terrace.

Questions & Comments:

- If training is for specific jobs in specific communities, women cannot seek jobs elsewhere
- Decreased funding to colleges has resulted in some colleges increasing the length of training courses to sustain funding levels

- Women's organizations recognize that if a person is IA or EI ineligible, there is little government staff can do to assist them in taking training; changes must happen in the political arena; the macro issue is tax cuts being balanced with the needs of equity groups; what does the public want to do for rural women
- Local decision-making has a cost in consistency if not supported by national standards
- Economic and social policy need to be linked for success EG If employers want better skills then what incentive is there for them to pay for them

**Presentation To Access to Learning, Training,
Employment Opportunities of Women in BC/Yukon Region**

presented by
Karla J. Hennig (Terrace Women's Centre)

In 1991 the Terrace Women's Centre conducted a needs assessment survey of over 600 women in the Terrace region. Needs identified by Women - in order of importance.

1. Childcare
2. Housing
3. Education - in general - specifically job skills, job search and life skills
4. Counseling and support services
5. Transportation
6. Employment - job creation, employment opportunities for disabled women, wage equity, access to non-traditional employment for women

In 1993 the TWC researched and published - "What Works - Women overcoming barriers to training and education in Terrace"

The survey identified three *main obstacles* when looking at training for women

- ◆ Problems with scheduling and curriculum
- ◆ Lack of support systems
- ◆ Lack of information

Successful Training

- ◆ Took note of societal expectations of women in the home
- ◆ Incorporated life skills to deal with home pressures which occur when women retrain
- ◆ Was module based
- ◆ Was funded on a continuing basis
- ◆ Was flexible and contained a variety of learning methods

Looking at our area today we see:

- low demand for people with few employability skills
- low demand for people with distinct specialty skills
- no adequate transportation for those without a private vehicle
- a number of high paying jobs but these are almost exclusively held by men and the demand for workers in these positions is shrinking.
- a trend towards the service and retail sectors - jobs which are low paying and have few benefits.

We deal with:

- a high number of women who have never worked outside the home or have not worked outside the home for many years, but who now need to find employment due to falling family income or family breakdown
 - women who have had only one job for many years, but have now lost that position.
 - a large number of women with very low employability skills
 - a number of women who have a history of working only seasonally.
 - a large number of women on waiting lists for training programs
-

(2)

There is discussion about what training programs for women are for:

- ? should we be supporting training which will turn out a large number of semi-skilled women who will only get low paying, entry level positions?
- ? should we concentrate on entrepreneurial or cooperative positions or will this merely hide the number of work hours and the amount of poverty women have to deal with?
- ? should we continue to sit on advisory committees of training institutions which are demanding more classroom time from students which does not translate into better paying positions after completing the programs?

Lastly, women in *rural communities* face additional problems when it comes to accessing training and employment.

- * vast distances to travel
- * vast distances which must be covered by services for women
- * poor roads - in some case impassable in winter weather
- * the need for women to leave the communities in which they live in to access training or jobs.
- * no public transportation between towns
- * services such as career exploration and resume preparation being offered only over the phone
- * sometimes no access to things such as computers
- * programs which are written from an urban perspective which assumes a large number of prospective employers
- * programs assuming support services exist in communities when they do not.

In summary, women in Terrace and area have identified employment as an important need in their lives but societal assumptions, lack of training programs which address specific needs in women's lives and lack of decently paid employment all serve to reinforce women's poverty in Northwestern BC.

To adequately address women's unemployment, training programs must be flexible enough to reflect women's needs, be on-going to allow women to address family crises and demands, and lead to real employment which pays adequately. Additional barriers for rural women must be addressed

Rural, high paying occupations must target women as employees if the gender imbalances in these professions is to be addressed.

Heather Gordon, Sunshine Coast Women's Centre, Box 1443, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0, (604) 885-4088, womens_resources@sunshine.net

- Technology like the Internet can assist women get employment through telecommuting on the Sunshine Coast (Its reasonable for women on the Sunshine Coast to commute to the Lower Mainland a couple of days a week but not daily)
- Sunshine Coast Women's Centre developed a "telecottage" pilot project and solicited government funding for this project unsuccessfully from a number of sources. This was to be a community technology centre providing access to new technologies, skills development, and employer-employee connections; to provide a self-sufficient local enterprise and a model for other rural communities; women could learn what they need when they needed it
- Industry Canada needs to be a part of the solution: The funding available through CAP and Volnet is only available if not on-line at all, and this is too restricted to provide effective community assistance

Handouts:

Sunshine Coast Telecottage Pilot Project, 1997.

SUNSHINE COAST TELECOTTAGE
PILOT PROJECT
(Originally written in 1997)

The Sunshine Coast Women's Resources Society, which operates the local Women's Centre, was formed in 1992 in response to a needs assessment undertaken by local women. One of the primary concerns identified was poverty caused by a lack of work. During the past seven years we have been able to successfully refer women to community agencies for a variety of concerns. However there has been no answer to the most frequently expressed dilemma, the problem of under- and unemployment. In the second quarter of 1996 (last available data in 1997) 9.34% or 786 of the working age females were in receipt of government assistance, the highest rate in the Greater Vancouver area.

The Sunshine Coast is located 30 km northwest of Vancouver and can only be reached by a 40-minute ferry trip. While many commute to Vancouver the cost of this effort each day is \$10 (bus) to \$30 (car), at least three hours time and exhaustion if undertaken on a daily basis. The commute is a realistic undertaking once or twice a week for a job which pays above minimum wage and impractical for one that does not.

In 1996 we had operated the Sunshine Coast's only free Internet access and learning centre for two years. In the course of that time, we had come to identify the clear potential of *telecommuting* as a practical source of increased employment; a means by which this semi-rural community could intersect the "Information Superhighway" in a way that creates direct economic benefit. With funding received from HRDC we were able to identify both a need among community businesses and a skill base among our client group that spoke directly to the potential of the Telecottage Project.

To accomplish this, we looked to a model already successfully applied in Great Britain and the European continent: the *Telecottage*. This is a term that refers to a "telecentre" - a community technology centre - which offers access to new technologies, skills development and employer-employee connections. Telecommuting as a way of employment is much more established in the common market countries. In Britain there are government sponsored networks of telecottages operating across the country.

Our research demonstrated that while there are employers and employees already telecommuting in Canada, there was no similar telecentres or a network of them in this country. What we proposed was a three-year Telecottage Pilot Project, that would have evolved into a self-sufficient local enterprise, and acted as a demonstration for other similar rural communities.

The goal of the Sunshine Coast Telecottage Proposal was to increase employment, both locally and off-coast, for women, through the creation of a Women's Centre-based telework centre.

The objectives were to provide local women with:

- An understanding of employers' current skill requirements
- An awareness of the resources available to upgrade telecommuting skills
- Access to new technologies as needed
- Assistance in employment searches
- Opportunities to explore different forms of employment
- Resources for small business development
- Ongoing support

All these objectives would have been met and delivered in a manner that was sensitive to women's learning needs and time constraints.

A further objective was to advocate for telecommuting as part of an over-all employment solution; that is, to broaden the awareness of employers and of the community at large about this economical and practical new employment option, and thereby to increase the number of these job opportunities.

Specifically, the above-stated objectives would have been met by:

- Identifying, testing and documenting telework services required and telework services already offered, through surveys and timely research.
 - Providing an information audit service by going into client companies and helping them to determine where they might use teleworkers.
 - Establishing and marketing an online directory and recruitment service to assist suppliers and purchasers of telework, temporary or contract employees.
-

- Assessing skill levels of teleworkers and teleworker novices through a standardized screening process.
- Monitoring upgrading resources both in the physical community and online.
- Maintaining our online reference library of telecommuting employment-posting and information sites.
- Providing a supply of current small business set-up resource materials and community contacts.
- Sourcing equipment and financial assistance to enable workers to set up home work stations.

Funding for the proposal amounted to a modest \$145,000 over the three years. There was support already in place for 25% from British Columbia's Ministry of Women's Equality. Copies of the full proposal were sent to some twenty recipients in both the federal and provincial governments. The responses were invariably along the lines of "What a great idea. We can't help you but you should talk to xxx - I'm sure they'll be able to give some assistance.

By the end of 1997 it was clear that there was no support in sight for an exploration of teleworking as one alternative to rural women (and men) pulling up roots and moving to the cities if they were ever to find employment. Meanwhile other parts of the world keep moving ahead on this front.

What is a Telecottage or Telecentre?

"Telecottage" is a word taken from Sweden, where the concept was born. In its purest sense it is a community resource centre, equipped with the latest technology such as computers, faxes, photocopiers, Internet connection and videoconferencing equipment, where local people can train or work using the resources provided.

Such centres in Wales are very diverse in resources, services and premises, but all are based on the original concept of reskilling, resourcing and regenerating economically deprived areas in Wales.

A community-based workforce is a more committed workforce: and this is demonstrated by increased motivation, loyalty and productivity. City-based companies are realising this, and more and more work is being tendered out to telecentres, reversing the centralising effects of the industrial revolution.



Welcome to the TCA

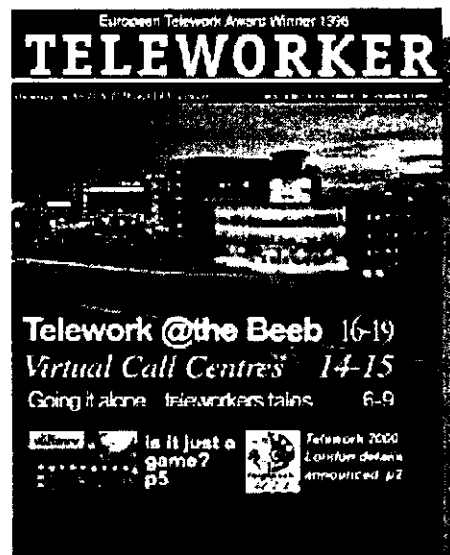
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European
Telework
Development

The TCA is a member of the European Telework Development Project (ETD)

The TCA is Europe's largest organisation dedicated to the promotion of teleworking. Over 2,000 people have joined the TCA since it started in 1993 including individual teleworkers, companies, and telecottage/telecentre managers. The TCA believes that teleworking can benefit people living in rural and urban areas by increasing the quality of life and improving access to work.



The TCA's bi-monthly magazine
Teleworker Aug/Sept Issue ([preview](#))

TCA members are mainly based in the UK, though the Association has members throughout Europe and the world. The TCA also enjoys close links with TCW (Telecottages Wales) and TWI (Telework Ireland).

The TCA likes to practice what it

NEWS

Employers Start Here Various studies show that teleworkers tend to have high skill levels. If you have tasks that you want individual or groups of teleworkers to do contact us teleworker@tca.org.uk we will pass your requirements on directly to our members

Call Centres Expect 10x Increase in Teleworkers

UK call centre managers are ready to embrace new technology to employ home workers & alleviate the current staffing crisis within the industry, according to a new report initiated by the TCA. The report reveals that while only 4% of call centre managers are currently employing teleworkers, 42% expect to do so in the near future.

The report, *Virtually There: The Evolution of Call Centres*, commissioned by Mitel and conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies and the TCA, is the largest survey of call centre managers ever conducted in the UK. Over half the call centre managers surveyed (56%) are in favour of using home workers to fill the current labour market gap.

For the complete press release [click here](#). To access the executive summary [click here](#)

A second more detailed report is planned so if you would still like to take part you can fill in the questionnaires if you are a [call centre manager](#) or a [potential teleworker](#).



Telework 2000 The TCA is to run Europe's most prestigious teleworking event. Set to take place in

Diane Faux & Diane Kokubun, Howe Sound Women's Centre, Box 2052, Squamish, BC
V0N 3G0, (604) 892-5748, hswc@mountain-inter.net

- The Squamish WomenLED Project (Leadership, Literacy and Economic Development), sponsored by the Howe Sound Women's Centre and Capilano College wants to identify barriers and explore options to improve women's personal economic situation
- The first phase was to gather women's stories; followed by phase II, identifying and considering available options; phase III was to develop a document to share with individuals, policy-makers what women in Squamish need and want
- Initial findings:
 - Most training is for people who are already job-ready, but many women cannot take advantage of this because they need training which includes life skills
 - Many women are not ready to enter the labour market after participating in programs that are short-term; long-term programming is needed
 - IA policies change too frequently making it difficult for both unemployed women and their advocates to keep up-to-date on requirements
- More action and fewer studies/less research is needed

Handouts:

Squamish WomenLED Project.

SQUAMISH WomenLED PROJECT

The Women L.E.D. Project wants to hear the voices of women in Squamish. The Project wants to hear as many different voices as possible: young women, senior women, women living in poverty or with disabilities, aboriginal and visible minority women, women who have discovered a way to achieve economic success. The Women L.E.D. Project wants to gather the voices of women - the stories of their successes and failures, of their hopes and dreams - by getting women together to form a focus group.

What is a focus group? It is a group in which all women are invited to participate. Women in a focus group will at first share their stories, especially those related to economic difficulties and well-being. Focus group meetings will be once a month at a place arranged by the Women L.E.D. Project. The stories told will be documented and used as a focus for the next stages of the project. As the project evolves, the focus group participants will begin to look at personal economic choices and to consider the barriers which make it difficult for them to aspire to these options.

The Women L.E.D. Project is divided into three Phases: Stories, Options and Strategies. Within each phase, focus group meeting material will be used to prepare for a public forum. The public forums are an invitation to the larger community to participate in the project and a way to present the discoveries and ideas of the focus group.

Following is a brief description of the focus of each phase of the project. Within each phase, three focus group meetings and one public forum are planned.

PHASE I *Stories /Personal Experiences*

Women are encouraged to talk, tell stories and listen to each other. The stories and discussions will be documented. The stories will come from experiences in the household and local economies.

PHASE II *Options*

The focus group will look at projects and programs in which women have improved their economic well-being e.g. training, business enterprises, cooperatives, alternative financing. Information about options of interest to women in the Squamish community will be identified. The focus group will begin to think about how women participate in the community's economy.

PHASE III *Strategy*

The focus group will look back to what they have learned and discovered in Phases I and II and begin to look at what barriers exist within themselves, the local economies and the global economy. When the barriers have been identified, the focus group will then ask: How do we get beyond the barriers?

In Squamish, people have traditionally made their living in forestry and forestry-related manufacturing and transportation. Changes in local and international markets have reduced jobs available. What can be done for the forestry workers and their families who must make adjustments to these changes? Government and industry respond to this situation by addressing the needs of an unemployed male workforce. But what about the female partner? What about the single female parents or disabled women in the community? The Women L.E.D. Project, sponsored by the Howe Sound Women's Centre and Capilano College, wants to find out what barriers exist and to explore options to help women improve their personal economic situation.

Beginning in August, the Women L.E.D. Project will meet as a group. This group will be the core or focus of the project. At the first gathering, women can share experiences, tell stories and learn from each other. Some of you will want to talk and there will be an opportunity to do so. Others might want only to listen.

As a woman in this focus group, you can express your experiences and dreams. The stories and discussions of the group will be documented. The documents will be a guide to what women in Squamish need for their economic well-being.

When the stories have been gathered, the focus of the Women L.E.D. Project will shift from the personal experience of women in Squamish to consider what options are available elsewhere. What's been done? And how did they do it? What have women working together been able to do to provide training and working opportunities to improve their economic well-being? Did they form a cooperative? A training centre? An art or craft centre? Did they find a product or products to market and retail? How did they do it? Where did they get the money? Did they do it as a group or as individuals? These are the kinds of questions the Women L.E.D. Project wants to ask in Phase II.

Phase III of the Women L.E.D. Project is a time to reflect about the discussions and discoveries in Phases I and II. It is a time to use this information to look ahead. Using what personal experience and needs are revealed and considering the successes and experiences of women here and elsewhere, the intent of Phase III is to produce a document which can be used to tell other individuals, agencies or groups and especially those in power positions, what the women of Squamish feel and want, need and hope for.

To summarize, the Women L.E.D. Project wants to be sure that:

1. The voices of local women are heard in the community economic planning process.
2. The Howe Sound Women's Centre gains information to consider when planning projects and programs for women.
3. Stories and experiences of Squamish women will be documented.
4. Options or lack of options available to local women in poverty are identified.
5. Policy makers and leaders at all levels of government can be made aware of the results and influenced by them in their decisions.

Letters

WomenLed clarified

Editor,

The Chief's interest in the Squamish WomenLed (Leadership, Literacy and Economic Development) project is most welcome; however, in response to your article of Sept. 7, some clarification is required.

Firstly, women have traditionally remained at home to care for the children, with no monetary value assigned to these responsibilities. As a result, women have been unable to identify in the same way as men, the ways this impacts on their self-esteem and self-confidence as it applies to the work they do, unless predetermined by an employer.

In the event of separation and divorce, women generally take on sole responsibility of the children including all their financial needs. These new responsibilities create new barriers to self-reliance.

In many cases, the welfare of the family becomes her sole responsibility. If she has not been trained in a trade or profession, she is forced to more carefully scrutinize her options for self-sufficiency. Her options are limited, especially when there are young children depending on her.

With 50 per cent of marriages ending in divorce, and 90 per cent of single parents being women, the importance of earning "enough" becomes crucial. Single women are supporting their children below the poverty level. This includes those earning minimum wage or just above. Daycare expenses and the "unrecognized" costs of working, keep them trapped at the poverty level.

Women's wages and benefits are usually not the same as men's. Until recently,

"Women's wages and benefits are usually not the same as men's."

—Pat Wilbur

women earned on average only 60 per cent of what men with comparable education and skills earned. The gap has narrowed now to 70 per cent, not because women's salaries have risen, but because in the cost-cutting, union-busting 80s and 90s, men's salaries have dropped.

The stories being shared by the women participating in the WomenLed Project are being accumulated, with the intent of documenting issues at the grassroots level; and thereby creating instruments that will provide local women with a collective voice in decisions being made that affect them.

With this in mind, the Howe Sound Women's Centre is pursuing new ideas to support women in the community of Squamish and seeking women who would like to be part of this focus group to get involved at monthly meetings and several public forums planned throughout the year (some subsidies are available for childcare/transit).

If they cannot attend, we welcome suggestions, to the attention of Pat Wilbur: by phone: (892-5748); fax (892-5749); mail: Box 2052, Squamish, V0N 3G0; or drop them off by letter at the Howe Sound Women's Centre - 38138 Second Avenue weekdays between 12 - 4 p.m.

This project has evolved through an accumulation of interests from different

departmental levels of government. The Federal Ministry of Status of Women Canada; Provincial Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and Human Resources Development Canada - National Literacy Secretariat; Adult Literacy Cost-share Partnership Program; and the Provincial Ministry of Women's Equality.

However without the coordinating committee: Monica Harvey, Jessica Chudy, (both summer students earning post-high school education credits) and Alfrieda Eldon, Pam Gliatis and Pat Wilbur as volunteers, it would not have seen the light of day. Getting all these components on board took an enormous amount of time and effort, along with the full partnership of Capilano College and the Howe Sound Women's Centre.

This is an exciting adventure for women in our community and will finally provide the hard data needed to begin to provide ways to better meet their needs.

Pat Wilbur
Volunteer Co-Coordinator, Howe Sound Women's Centre

P.S. The statement towards the end of your article that states: "The lack of women in high-paying "traditional" trades such as logging and in the pulp industry is also something Billy would like to see change." I believe what is meant is that these trades are "traditional" to men, but "non-traditional" to women, and that through the use of improved technology should now be more accessible to women. As well, the quote pulled out for note was attributed to me in error.

Priti Shah & Marcia Braundy, WETC

WETC can be reached through Priti Shah at (604) 945-5836, nshah48104@aol.com

- WETC is a coalition of individuals and groups which has been involved in women's employment and training issues since 1985; the WETC Advisory Committee was formed in the 80's as the Women's Employment Advisory Committee (WEAC), a forum where HRDC staff and WETC representatives share information and engage in active consultation; WETC AC now includes representatives from MAETT, SDES, Women's Equality and SWC (the Province became involved after there were changes in the fed/prov environment)
- WETC AC identifies the impact of public policy on women in BC and is involved early enough to have influence, and so works for all involved
- With financial support from SWC, WETC has prepared a herstory of its past work and met with women in the community to discuss its future role; it then developed an action plan to rebuild WETC
- WETC consultation findings:
 - LMDA and changes to EI legislation were critical issues to women
 - Women's access to training is restricted
 - No gender-based analysis has been applied to the development of the LMDA
 - Skills-based programs have been replaced with short-term programs and interventions
 - Program administration and processes are cumbersome
 - Community-based training has suffered and there has been loss of training expertise as a result
 - Women consulted felt that WETC has a role to play among partners involved in training and employment for women

Handouts:

WETC, Participating for Change. 1999.

Women's Employment and Training Coalition (WETC)
"Participating For Change"
Presentation to Women's Employment Advisory Committee(WEAC)
December 3, 1999

Introduction:

What is the Women's Employment and Training Coalition (WETC)?

WETC is an unfunded, voluntary coalition of individuals and groups, in the Lower Mainland and elsewhere in British Columbia, involved in women's employment and training issues. Originally formed in 1985 to respond to issues for women related to the Canadian Job Strategy (CJS), membership is open to all women and groups concerned with a wide variety of women's employment and training issues. We have responded to a variety of ongoing and crisis situations in the past 15 years, the most recent resulting in the inclusion of an equity mandate in the Industrial Training and Apprenticeship Commission legislation, and the hiring of an Equity Coordinator by that Commission. Meetings were held regularly at the Douglas College Women's Centre in New Westminster. Recently due to space shortage at Douglas College, WETC is temporarily housed at the YWCA at 535 Hornby St. Vancouver.

In the past, members would meet once a month at Douglas College. We would share information about the impacts of Federal and Provincial policy and program decisions on individual women and programs. We would determine what course of action might be taken and plan strategies. In the late 1980's, the senior officials at EIC (now HRDC), agreed to meet with WETC in a Co-Chaired format, to share information and engage in an active consultation process. Women's Employment Advisory Committee (WEAC), was a forum for open discussion where specific issues in the field might be brought to the table, not for advocacy purposes, but to illustrate the actual impacts of policy and program decisions on women in the field. The usefulness of these meetings was highlighted and understood as we moved from commenting on decisions already made, to providing input into the Chair's Planning Guidelines for the BC/Yukon Region before it became a plan. The WEAC Committee was and still is a unique body in Canada, and while it has been looked to as a model from across the country, other regions have yet to achieve this level of respectful consultation. In B.C., we almost lost this committee this last year, but through the concerted efforts of WETC and some rethinking on the part of governments, the Committee has again found a new life. This Federal/Provincial gathering of WETC's extended WEAC is part of the effort of the next phase. We welcome your participation.

Recently, as women's working conditions have changed, particularly related to the closing of many programs that served the needs of women, and cutbacks to others, meeting once a month has been difficult. This concern needed to be explored as part of a larger research project into WETC's role as a provincial voice on women's employment and training issues.

Approach to the Research:

The WETC Steering Committee decided to prepare a Herstory of WETC's work accomplishments and to meet women in the community to discuss WETC future role. We have to meet with approximately 25 of Lower Mainland groups and 8 groups in the Interior and on the Island to share the Herstory, and determine what these groups might want to do in collaboration.

In the process of consultation with the community groups, the research took a turn and became an action oriented participatory project. It became evident that crucial issues around Women's employment and training were the result of the impact of Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the EI legislation.

We became aware that the federal /provincial agreement was in transition with the potential for complete devolution of power to the provincial level at some future date. This agreement and the transition process became an obstacle for community based organizations and clients. There are still many problems associated with this potential transfer, and women have been falling through the cracks as these discussions proceed. The transition process was further impeded by the legislation change in 1996 whereby, Unemployment Insurance became Employment Insurance and eligibility for EI became more stringent, gradually eliminating 70 % of individuals who would have qualified prior to 1996.

Project Goals :

- 1. A Herstory of WETC based on interviews and past reports. A short report and flyer to be produced for future reference and as information and educational tools.**
- 2. Through consultation with community groups, government ,institutions, etc. establish the relevance or not of WETC and consider a possible framework for this.**
- 3. Based upon a positive outcome explore and develop an action plan related to the rebuilding of WETC.**

Methodology :

One of the key outcomes for this project was to document the current issues concerning women's access to employment and training. The approach used to determine the objective

was to interview key organizations, grassroots community members and women in the government-funded training and employment programs.

Various methods were used to conduct the research:

- A questionnaire was developed to use in the face-to-face and phone interviews.
- Interviews via teleconference calls to individuals representing the federal and provincial governments.
- Studying relevant research documents.
- Regional issues - 8 Women's Centre's were contacted.
Again WETC was playing a facilitating role in bringing the current issues to the forefront with people who have a responsibility to respond.

As a result of the consultation, the following major issues became evident in the community:

1) Access:

- The EI Act replaced the UI ACT in 1996 which reduced eligibility for training for women. As funding opportunities available for community-based training for women dropped dramatically, more training became privatized and less women had access to it
- There has been a gradual devolution of responsibility for training from the federal government to the provinces since 1996 . Many women are caught without access to training opportunities in this shuffle, while shifting the responsibility from one level of government to another.
- Clients who lack basic skills or have social and/or economic disadvantages have little or no access to government funded training.
- Women with multiple barriers are usually not eligible for EI assistance. With the reduction in Employment Assistance Services (EAS) program budgets , access for these women for future opportunities is eroded.
- Financial contribution from the client as a requirement prevents many women from accessing future training opportunities and gaining economic independence.

Recommendations :

- Clearly defined equity principles should be integrated in the LMDA agreement, protected by national standards and sustained through any devolution of training from the federal to provincial governments, and in any privatization of delivery.
- In the revised delivery and implementation of employment and training programs, accessibility and equality (as defined in the Principles) are constantly measured, evaluated and accounted for.
- A provincial WEAC should be formed to assess all policies and strategies with a gender-based lens. This work should be supported by WETC members, Status of

Women Canada, the Ministry of Women's Equality, HRDC and Provincial Ministries responsible for training and employment.

- Eligibility criteria for programs should be broadened based on clients' needs and situations.

2) Currently, No Gender-based Analysis applied to the development of LMDA:

- As Equity principles were not defined in the LMDA agreement, there is no commitment to ensure that training funds are targeted to those who have been disadvantaged in our labour force. It will be difficult to implement the Employment Equity Act in an environment where training is not being used to enhance and build the capacities of these individuals.
- With the progress of local autonomy and decentralized decision making there is a need to have national standards for government practices and accountability in dealing with training across Canada. These standards are important to maintain a racism and sexism free environment across regions and sub-regions, ensuring fair and equitable client service.

Recommendations :

- Principles of equity should be incorporated in the LMDA so when the full devolution and transfer of responsibility takes place, equity programs are in place and are not eroded.
- Regional and sub-regional offices should be mandated to implement these principles in their service delivery
- National standards of practice should be developed with the assistance of WEAC, Status of Women-Canada, National Women's Bureau, HRDC and National Women's Reference Group.

3) Short Term Quick Fix Planning :

- According to a survey by ASPECT "Analysing the Impact and Challenging the Assumptions," 82% of the skills-based programs are gone and replaced by short term programs and interventions" which do not include skill-based training, child care supports or life skills. Historically these have proven to be essential elements in preparing women to successfully enter the labour market.

Recommendations :

- Training needs to be holistic and flexible and includes child care and transportation supports, cultural competence, with a client-centred practice and approach.

- “Best Practices” in the community should be implemented eg. Project- based Training programs, Bridging programs, WITT programs etc.

4) Program Administration and Processes are cumbersome :

- The approval process for clients to get into the training programs has increased by 8 to 12 weeks.
- Individuals referred by community-based organizations to assessment bodies face many hurdles, only 10% of already screened applicants are accepted and processing time is at least a couple of months.

Recommendations :

- The term partnership needs to be re-emphasized , better cooperation should be modeled between various departments, ministries, community-based organizations, advocacy groups and clients. The process for the next phase of transfer from federal government to provincial should be a place to demonstrate true partnership.
- Government should simplify the administrative processes. The referral, intake and qualification process should be re-examined to reduce barriers and increase access.
- We recommend working with ASPECT in simplifying administrative and operational issues.

5) Changing Role of Community-based Organizations :

- Service providers wanting to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged clients are being forced to look at various forms of income generating sources like fee-payer programs, service charges etc. This change results in a practical and philosophical shift in the organization which results in the loss of valuable and greatly needed services to help those with the greatest needs.
- Due to large cutbacks to the employment and training programs delivered by these organizations there is a tremendous loss of knowledge and expertise from staff who understand the realities and needs of the grassroots communities.

Recommendations :

- To assist the clients to be economically independent, both the federal and provincial government should collaborate with the community-based organizations and independent advocacy and women groups to re-evaluate program criteria and increase EAS budget.
- To use the resources and expertise in the community which would benefit the client and be a valuable and economical investment. Government does not need to reinvent the

wheel.

Recommendations for WETC:

Partnership :

- WETC has an important role in the dialogue between labour market partners as the advanced education and training system devolves and re-evolves, providing insight and feed back on the issues affecting women accessing, or trying to access, advanced education, training and employment.
- WETC can help to build collaborative community based partnerships that addresses the needs of women in employment and training programs.

Leadership :

- Develop supportive learning models such as mentoring programs that provide women with employment, educational opportunities, and economical viable opportunities. This would help WETC to be more visible and pro-active in the community.
- Develop and implement initiatives that specifically target women facing multiple barriers such as women with disabilities, First Nations women, women of colour, immigrants, women of low socio-economic status and single mothers.

Communication Structures :

- In the current climate of devolution women have expressed a need for a group like WETC, which can help to advocate on current issues of employment and training. WETC also needs to take action around issues of welfare, educational opportunities, increasing poverty and changes to immigration law .
- The reality of women's working life has changed. Insecurity of work, more demands on time and less pay have increased the load of work on women's lives. There is a need to develop new ways of doing volunteer and advocacy work .
- WETC needs a new structure and electronic communication network, to ensure access to all women.

WETC has been able to access, through VolNet, a computer set-up with a potential for a Provincial Communications Networking system for Women's Employment and Training Information and Action Exchange. We need to discuss how this could be used.

Large Group Discussion Highlights

- Concern that EAS-type services have replaced training and skills-based programming
- Focus on EI/IA recipients is too narrow; government needs to focus on unemployed Canadians
- Retraining often focuses on work which tends to be carried out primarily by men EG Retraining forestry workers will help more men than women
- Getting job search assistance to people on IA early is most effective; greatest percentage of people on IA are men from the eighties recession
- Public policy debate around foreign credentials is on now; see www.lookingahead.ca
- Need to educate employers on employment equity which local groups are not funded to do but HRDC and Province have staff to do this
- We need to keep in mind that having information is not the complete answer EG smokers may have information but still continue to smoke
- An unfortunate consequence of contracting services in the community is that service providers, rather than government staff, are now deciding who to accept into programs and there are few options for appealing a negative decision
- With changes in programs and services, it is difficult for clients who need a combination of skills (perhaps life skills, literacy, work experience, job-finding skills) to get the assistance they need
- Access to training and labour market programs is a problem for clients who are neither IA or EI eligible, for instance, immigrants
- It is important for all services to be in one place and to be simple to access
- HRDC would like open dialogue both locally and at this table; open discussion needs to reflect people's needs
- MAETT noted the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (federal and provincial) meet yearly to discuss projects to address program and service gaps EG Long-term unemployment, underemployment, older workers
- HRDC and MAETT are funding Older Worker Pilot Projects and would like possibilities from women