

West Kootenay Women's Association
Employment Equity Project Final Report to Status of Women Canada
April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2001

IMPACTS OF PROJECT

1. Specific changes resulting from project

1.1 Improved recruitment processes and more hiring of women on major construction projects

Arrow Lakes Generating Station Project (ALGS - formerly Keenleyside)

- Expansion of recruitment process through newspaper and radio advertising throughout the Columbia River basin soliciting "expressions of interest" from women seeking trades or technical employment on Columbia Basin hydro projects,
- Submission of over 125 resumes by interested women and forwarding of resumes to the Columbia Power Corporation (CPC) and Columbia Hydro Constructors (CHC), the employer for the ALGS.
- Provision of a one-day Women's Information Meeting for 40 women including site tour, introduction to WITT and business meeting with construction contractor, owner, employer and unions.
- Through Employment Equity Pilot Project, ensured the creation and maintenance of an up-to-date roster of women applicants and matching of the resume pool to the job profile of the ALGS project and other construction projects in the local area. As of fall 2000, out of 22 resumes identified as "job ready", 12 equity candidates gained employment.
- Through Employment Equity Pilot Project, ensured that the Employment Equity Officer would have access to job orders at the same time as the Columbia Hydro Constructors.
- Through Employment Equity Pilot Project seed fund for training, hired two women in trainee positions – one warehouse trainee and one cement mason trainee. The warehouse trainee has now written a Class 3 exam and the cement mason trainee has gained her 1st year apprenticeship. The expenditure from the seed fund was \$20,000. Other partners, including Kiewit and Training Works contributed \$35,558 to training.

Kootenay Ferry Project

- Expansion of Maglio Industries recruitment process to include:
 - Meeting between WKWA, Kootenay WITT and Maglio Industries representatives to identify ways to conduct outreach recruitment to women
 - Provision of resumes of qualified tradeswomen
 - Successfully requested Maglio Industries' targeted communication of job advertisement to all women's centres in the Kootenay and Boundary regions

1.2 Changes in support services available to women at Arrow Lakes Generating Station Project

- Influenced the development of an Employment Equity Officer (EEO) function for women working on the ALGS construction site, carried out by the (female) First Nations Coordinator for Peter Kiewit Sons Co. Ltd. (project contractor)
- New support services provided by the EEO include an orientation for new employees to the EEO service; response to individual concerns; distribution of anti-harassment policies; weekly on-site tour and communication; networking and social events for women employees.

1.3 Changes to Columbia Power Corporation's approach to employment equity coordination

- Successfully advocated for a one-year pilot project to establish an employment equity coordinator function for the Arrow Lakes Generating Station Project. Pilot project has been extended a further 6 months as of March, 2001. \$50,000 provided by Columbia Power Corporation for first year of pilot project.

1.3 Changes to Selkirk College's Trades and Technology Program Priorities

- Successfully advocated for, and assisted Selkirk College to develop a 14-point proposal for a Women in Trades and Technology (WITT) Program. Selkirk College rated the WITT program as "high priority" in its funding submission.
- As part of a WKWA advocacy initiative, Selkirk College has gone on record as requesting core, annualized funding for the WITT program.
- Secured in-kind and advocacy support from Selkirk College to create a Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator position at the College to assist in the construction and industrial trades areas.

2. Other major achievements of project

2.1 Community-based advisory committee. A community-based advisory committee met four times during the project to help set direction and evaluate progress. The committee had participation from First Nations, health, government, small business, training, education, manufacturing, forestry, community advocacy, childcare, women's organizations, financial services, seniors and trade unions. The geographic coverage included Trail, Fruitvale, Rossland, Castlegar, Nelson, Blewett, Nakusp, South Slokan, Salmo and Kaslo. The composition of the advisory committee reflected the project's focus on influencing systemic change. Committee members were chosen for their knowledge of issues, their credibility, diversity and influence.

2.2 Local Best Practices Research. Research into employment equity “best practices” of West Kootenay employers, human resource managers and trade unions in public, private, non-profit and co-operative sectors.

- Conducted interviews with over 20 employers, managers and union representatives regarding their overall approach to employment equity; recruitment and hiring policies and practices; workforce retention policies and practices including anti-harassment; training on equity issues; success stories, role models and resources to share; and needs related to equity, e.g. information, trainers, networking.
- Obtained copies of different employers’ EE resources including anti-harassment policies; codes of conduct; employment equity action plans; library resources on HR management; worker education materials; collective agreement clauses on equity; and names of local trainers on equity issues.
- Compiled research results and distributed widely throughout the region.
- Presented research results at International Women’s Day, 2000 and to the West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association, March, 2001.

2.3 Research and documentation of a “Business Case for Employment Equity”

- Acquired Diversity at Work, a book authored by a Canadian who is coordinating an international consortium of corporations advocating for ISO standards related to diversity.
- Acquired University of Western Ontario, IVEY Business Journal, September/October, 1999 Issue on Diversity in the Workplace.
- Developed a two-page “business case for employment equity”, which was presented to all employers, human resource managers and trade union representatives who participated in the above-mentioned interviews.
- Distributed “business case” to West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association members.

2.4 Employers needs assessment re. professional development on equity, leadership, diversity and human resources best practices.

- Held discussions with representatives of small business, economic development, education, health and other sectors re. skills and education needs
- Collaborated with Selkirk College Continuing Education and the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre re. how to meet needs
- Made joint presentation with Greater Trail Community Skills Centre to West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association to identify needs and facilitate networking between HR managers and training providers
- Received enquiry from HR manager for large industrial employer re. potential availability to discuss equity issues with senior management
- Explored the concept of an “Institute for Leadership, Equity and Diversity”

2.5 Development of an “employers tool kit” and web site proposal.

- Created an Outreach Recruitment Directory of all West Kootenay organizations serving equity groups on employment matters.

- Created a Job Postings Directory for Employers that tailors the outreach recruitment directory to the needs and perspectives of employers.
- Distributed the directories to all employment counsellors, equity organizations, chambers of commerce, business groups, and human resource management groups in the region.
- Created Guidelines for Hiring a Diverse Workforce and distributed to the West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association.
- Identified a gap in government on-line services to businesses re. human resource management practices.
- Negotiated with HRDC to create a project to develop a web site with equity and human resource best practices including the Guidelines for Hiring a Diverse Workforce.
- Awaiting final approval from BC/Yukon Regional office of HRDC regarding the web site project.

2.6 Advocacy for regional initiatives to support women in trades and technology

- Advocated for paid equity expertise into equity target setting for Arrow Lakes Generating Station project.
- Participated in Columbia Basin Trust Task Force on Construction consultation, Feb.9, 2001.
- Advocated to Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power Corporation, Ministry of Labour, local MLAs and Selkirk College to support a regional Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator position (whose responsibilities would include coordinating an Equity Integration Committee for the region)
- Advocated to Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology via local MLAs to support core, annualized funding for Selkirk College's WITT program
- Negotiated advocacy support from local MLAs, Allied Hydro Council and Selkirk College regarding the above initiatives.

2.7 Statistical research into employment equity in the region.

- Obtained 1996 Census data on earnings, income, labour force participation, occupations, demographics and education.
- Compiled data into tables to enable gender-based comparisons.¹
- Utilized highlights in Power Point presentation to the Advisory Committee.
- Used statistics to support the project goals of effecting systemic change.

2.8 Research into career choice support for youth.

- Conducted interviews with educators, counsellors and youth centre coordinators to identify career-related programs and activities as well as to assess top priority needs around providing young people with information to broaden their post secondary education and career choices.
- Compiled research results.

¹ Research is incomplete because, at a certain point, it was assessed as a lower priority than other work to be undertaken.

- Provided resource materials to Nelson and District Youth Centre re. human rights education programs for youth.
- Included all of the region's youth centres in the Outreach Recruitment Directory.

2.9 Media Articles on Women's Success Stories

- Negotiated with professional writer to develop interview style stories for local newspapers that focus on employment successes by local women.
- Developed and submitted two stories to West Kootenay Weekender and two more in progress. Completed interviews include (1) two women CEOs of post-secondary institutions and (2) home-based career woman/human rights advocate who works for the International Garment, Leather and Textile Workers Union.
- Stories awaiting publication at this time.

2.10 Presentations to Groups

- Women's Ad Hoc Committee to the Columbia Basin Trust
- Board of Directors of Columbia Basin Trust
- Women's Employment Advisory Council
- West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association

2.11 Grassroots Communication to Women

- Wrote regular articles in the WKWA Newsletter
- Created information display at the WK Women's Festival, August, 1999
- Presented to annual general meetings of WKWA and Kootenay WITT
- Prepared information on human resource best practices and career choice for youth for International Women's Day display tables.

2.12 Attitudinal Change in Influential Players in Regional Economy

- The community-based Advisory Committee identified attitudinal change as one of the major accomplishments of the project. The range of players who "opened up" to equity during the project included human resource managers, construction contractors, employers and union representatives, government agency personnel, Selkirk College senior managers, board members of the Columbia Basin Trust and others.

2.13 Thoughtful approach to project wind-up

- The project is winding up in a conscious manner with linkages made, partnerships developed and concrete steps taken to establish long-term support for equity. Some of the next steps have not yet been confirmed but the responsibilities for action have been identified. Examples of this include the web site, the WITT program and the Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator.

- The project has laid the groundwork for future work. It got people talking and doing things to begin to support equity. The link to the next SWC project on women and poverty is one example.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCES

3. *Strengths of chosen strategies, model and approach: transferable lessons.*

3.1 Positive, practical focus

- The project has emphasized positive examples of things that can be done to promote or support employment equity.
- This is seen as a strength because it shifts the focus on the issue from a traditional “problem focus” to providing practical information, contacts and resources that lead to fairness.
- The link between positive and practical is key because it means that equity values don’t get lost even though the focus of discussion has changed.
- The documentation of local best practices and communication of those to leading HR managers illustrates a practical approach that now gives those HR managers the tools to “lead by example”. The positive approach was critical to getting buy-in from HR managers because they need to be able to explain and act on equity in their own terms.
- The focus on achievable outcomes has resulted in a reasonable list of achievements including financial contributions and changes in employment and training policies and programs.

3.2 Non-judgmental, strategic approach

- The approach to dialogue with the community has been non-judgmental and, at the same time, has addressed important strategic issues.
- The project has not tried to impose its definition of equity on others but rather has sought out the best evidence from the community itself (e.g. collective agreement clauses, management plan directions etc.) that supports equity.
- The project has presented proposals of suggested solutions rather than insisting on a fixed approach.
- The approach to advocacy has been collegial and respectful. This has several strengths in that it helps maintain openness, encourages movement in the direction of support, avoids generating unwanted resistance (through a hostile or confrontational attitude) and promotes a positive association between employment equity and respectful conduct.
- To ensure that this more “moderate” approach stays strategic requires:
 - a shared understanding of the feminist ideal of equity by the core group (in this case, the steering committee and WKWA Coordinating Collective),
 - trust in a positive approach to systemic change by the core group,
 - selection of a diverse mix of community advisors who are supportive, influential and respectful (but who may have quite differing perspectives from each other and from the core group – also, be sure to include some “radical” perspectives so that those ideas are part of the mix),

- selection of advisors who can give the project what it needs (ie. contacts, community-supported strategies etc.) to achieve its results,
- a choice of activities that are likely to meet with success,
- ongoing communication within the core group,
- strong trust and mutual respect throughout, especially in the face of challenges and resistance
- commitment to positive, realistic solutions.
- Virtually all of the project's successes are based in some way on this approach.

3.3 Priorities defined by the community

- The Advisory Committee's input resulted in significant changes to the project's direction from what was proposed in the grant submission.
- The WKWA/WITT steering committee and the WKWA Coordinating Collective considered the Advisory Committee's input and unanimously accepted it.

3.4 Effective communication with diverse players, including funders and politicians

- The project has been able to lever support by being respectful of the parameters within which other players operate and by asking them what they need in order to best contribute what they have to offer.
- A key to success is a flexible and confident approach to communication e.g. reframing questions spontaneously to obtain the most relevant and appropriate information. The best practices interviews required flexibility because many interviewees didn't relate to the term "employment equity" but could easily describe policies and practices that contributed to their goal of fairness.
- Advisory Committee members stated that a key project strength was the skill of the Coordinator in being able to find common ground with a wide variety of players, unlocking entrenched positions, removing fear and using finesse to help move ideas forward.

4. Resistance to the project

4.1 Attitude of several municipal and regional government representatives

- The original project proposal suggested a focus on influencing local governments and encouraging them to develop employment equity policies. This focus was later changed to a broader appeal to employers, human resource managers and unions, in general. Part of the reason for the change was a strongly negative response to a letter the coordinator wrote to the Administrator for the City of Nelson. The project requested a meeting with the City's Employment Equity Committee and interested councillors in order to develop a useful model for encouraging other local governments to create employment equity policies. The administrator declined the meeting in a brief letter. The project's response was to not pursue a relationship with the City of Nelson.

- The only negative response to the request for an employer interview came from the Regional District of Central Kootenay. The phone respondent was quite reluctant in his agreement to a meeting. He was not in his office at the appointed time (the only situation where this was encountered). The project's response was to not attempt further communication with this individual.

4.2 Two tradeswomen with individual advocacy situations relative to KPP

- Two of the forty women who attended the Women's Information Meeting for the Keenleyside Powerplant Project are engaged in individual advocacy regarding human rights. The women were in communication with the project and received information on the project's strategy for creating a systemic change solution to equity hiring at KPP. They communicated with the WKWA Coordinating Collective, Status of Women Canada and the office of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to try to have the coordinator fired and/or project funding withdrawn. The project has no mandate to pursue individual advocacy. The response of the WKWA has been to ensure clear communication regarding the women and their concerns.
- The impact of the human rights situation at the Columbia Basin Hydro Projects (beyond the substantive merits and resolution of the complaints) has made it imprudent to advocate for on-site equity facilitation at this time. This has resulted in a change in advocacy strategy towards a Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator at a neutral location.
- In addition, the complaints to Status of Women Canada strained relations for a time between WKWA and Status of Women Canada. They also resulted in project time being spent addressing allegations rather than promoting equity.

4.3 General resistance, slow uptake, non-responsiveness etc.

- The Advisory Committee identified the main barrier to greater success as being historical attitudes about equity and the short, two year period in which to effect change (given the "paradigm shift" nature of the required changes).

5. *Project Evaluation Mechanisms and Measures*

5.1 Tangible outcomes and achievements

- The project has been evaluated in terms of tangible outcomes as well as achievements on the road to tangible outcomes. These are itemized in Sections 1 and 2 of this report.

5.2 Relationship to stated goals and objectives.

- The expected concrete results of the first year of the project were as follows:
 - Influencing the recruitment and training of employees at the Arrow Lakes Generating Station Project,
 - Influencing municipalities, Columbia Power Corporation and the Columbia Basin Trust to adopt employment equity policies, and
 - Developing a promotional campaign and package on employment equity.

- The project has succeeded in influencing the recruitment and training of employees at ALGS by soliciting expressions of interest, assisting the development of an Employment Equity Officer function, successfully advocating for training seed money, and monitoring the EEO pilot project.
- The project has not undertaken advocacy directly with municipalities or crown corporations regarding the development of equity policies. We have developed an excellent working relationship with the Columbia Power Corporation. We have been recognized as a resource on women's employment issues by the Columbia Basin Trust. We have assisted a member of the City of Nelson Employment Equity Committee to obtain information needed for her participation in that Committee.
- The promotion of employment equity has primarily targeted key players such as human resource managers, employers, unions and educational institutions. The "package" of educational materials included the business case on equity, the outreach recruitment directory, guidelines for hiring a diverse workforce and the local best practices research results. There was less involvement with the media than originally expected because the project and WKWA wanted to keep a low profile while the human rights complainants were trying to shut down the project.

5.3 Formal evaluation by Advisory Committee and Coordinating Collective

What are the most important things the EE project has achieved?

- Creating the EEO position at the Arrow Lakes Generating Station project
- Potential WITT course at Selkirk College
- Making linkages to the Columbia Basin Trust
- Reframing the issue as a labour demographics solution in the construction sector
- The solid concrete connections made among groups such as the HR managers
- Building a knowledge base in this region regarding equity education that is accessible to everyone
- Getting the word out in a non-confrontational way to people (including influential people) who previously didn't know about or were resistant to equity issues
- Some women were hired on construction projects
- Documented baseline information so that we are now in a position to monitor progress
- Getting HRDC interested in the web site project
- Winding up the project well, knowing where we're leaving off, the avenues to unfold, partnerships and concrete initiatives established
- Stakeholder cooperation and networking – mutual interests shared, synergy
- The non-confrontational, win-win approach
- Networking and discussion of issues on the Advisory Committee
- The link to the determinants of health
- Laying the groundwork, getting people talking and doing things

Where has the project fallen short?

- Hasn't really fallen short
- There's always more that we could have done
- Perhaps some wind-down time to baby-sit some of the initiatives to assist getting them off on a stronger footing.
- Not sure that what has been started will be continued; not confident that there is something or somebody to carry through
- Despite good plans for closure and links to the future, still concerned about whether a sustained fire has been lit
- Having more focuses than construction
- Where we met barriers but it was okay not to pursue those areas
- Perhaps we were spread too thin – perhaps fewer pockets of activity to enable concentrating on further development of others ie. no media campaign
- More time with the HR managers
- Clearly establishing realistic outcomes
- We are only 2” along the 10” ruler instead of 5”

What were the factors that contributed to the project's success?

- Project coordinator's skills in dealing with players, sorting out entrenched positions, sensitivity to the barriers and success in working around the barriers, exceptional finesse, perception and strategy instead of head-butting, removing fear, ability to find common ground, reframing issues
- Excellent coordination and facilitation; pro-active networking and opportunism; coordinator's capability, enthusiasm, pragmatic reality and facilitation skills
- Project coordinator's contacts
- Working with where people are at, going with the energy, a Tai Chi or Aikido kind of approach
- Timeliness with issues in the forefront of the media
- Timeliness regarding regional construction opportunities
- Good Advisory Committee with participation from different sectors of the community (comment from WKWA CC)
- Best practices identified so players can lead by example
- Support from others including funders
- The opportunity to work with the Columbia Power Corporation and Arrow Lakes project
- The favourable position regarding Columbia Basin Hydro Projects ie. half-owned by the people of the region
- The presence of Selkirk College and the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre in the area
- WITT and WKWA CC support for the project in the face of “heavy stuff”

What were the barriers to success?

- Long term, historical, entrenched attitudes; tradition

- Protectionism by trades and industry
- Patriarchy is a big one
- Limited time frame –e.g. to deal with bureaucracy, the time needed to nurture some of the openings a little further
- Limited resources – “more, better, bigger”
- Government funded projects such as this are vital and should be continued in order to build successful, engaged and knowledgeable communities
- Conceptually hard to really engage people with something so big
- Having to change people’s language and programming
- The “drama” that women on whose behalf we were working took so much energy and challenged us all
- Divisiveness in the women’s community (the “drama”)

What are the most important lessons learned from this project?

- The project illustrates clearly that employment equity can be moved forward under a reframed understanding and perspective
- Sensitivity as to how to deal with issues in public domain to effect change.
- Importance of knowing key players and making linkages (for WKWA).
- Partnerships are important in success of projects such as this
- Networking and partnerships can pay off
- Grassroots action works!
- Radical, in-your-face stuff doesn’t always create movement. It was good not to go that route but be more patient, middle path – still strong but not confrontational; making progress without burning bridges.
- Persevering in the face of a human rights conflict is scary when you are a small organization. It was a good lesson that we (WKWA) didn’t stop.
- Importance of checking and getting clear with funders.
- Importance of boundaries ie. the in-writing only policy.
- Personally learned a lot about the topics and approaches.

How has this project benefited women in our region?

- More women in trades are working
- It has increased the profile of employment equity; EE language is more commonplace
- There is increased safety for women in workplaces, to some degree.

How has this project benefited the West Kootenay Women’s Association?

- Given WKWA a respectable working relationship and profile with people we haven’t worked with in the past. It has opened doors.
- We have learned about employment equity, where there are gaps for women and where we need to go in future.

How would WKWA and/or Kootenay WITT like to share the results of the project and with whom?

- A one page summary to the BC and Yukon Women's Centres, the West Kootenay Women's Council, the East Kootenay Women's Council and selected service organizations within the Kootenay-Boundary region.

How would you assess the project's results with the "expected results" outlined at the start?

- As the project evolved, we made ongoing assessments to identify the most fruitful avenues to pursue. We think that we have pursued the directions that presented the greatest potential for success.
- The project did an excellent job of collaborating with other groups and developing coordinated strategies – particularly with Kootenay WITT, Selkirk College, the Columbia Power Corporation, the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, HRDC, the Ministry for Women's Equality, Community Futures, the Allied Hydro Council, the Employment Equity Officer for Peter Kiewit Sons Co. Ltd. and the West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association
- The project's work in relation to the Columbia Basin Hydro Projects has moved slowly but has realized a more significant achievement than we had expected, particularly in light of the circumstances.
- The project's work with the Columbia Basin Trust has been slower and less extensive than hoped for. This was a conscious choice, primarily based on a mutual assessment of the realistic opportunities at this time.

What follow-up is required now to ensure the project's progress?

- Keep tabs on what is going on
- Draw in advisors to the new project
- Increase the education about the project's achievements and how it impacts women.
- Get some serious money to hire someone to carry the ball.

6. Sharing Project Results

The project will prepare and distribute a one page summary to the BC and Yukon Women's Centres, the West Kootenay Women's Council, the East Kootenay Women's Council and selected service organizations within the Kootenay-Boundary region.

7. Next Steps to Ensure Progress

The next steps have been described in several places above. WKWA will stay in touch with key players who are moving the ball forward on different initiatives and will assist when and where necessary to give a further push.

8. Financial Reports

Budget vs. Actual – SWC Funding

Item	Budget	Actual
Travel	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,560.00
Publicity	\$ 2,000.00	1,500.00
Salaries - RB	\$ 40,000.00	40,744.23
Honouraria	\$ 0.00	0.00
Facilities	\$ 3,600.00	3,600.00
Materials	\$ 900.00	814.47
Other/ Phone	\$ 1,300.00	781.30
TOTAL	\$ 49,000.00	\$ 49,000.00

Other Contributions:

Cash

Columbia Power Corporation	\$ 2,600
Peter Kiewit Sons Co. Ltd.	1,000

In-kind

Kootenay WITT (volunteer time)	5,200
Selkirk College (meeting space)	205
Kootenay Boundary Health (meeting space, phone long distance)	1,200

Total Direct Contributions \$ 10,205

Funds Levered Through Project:

Columbia Power Corporation	65,000
Peter Kiewit Sons	32,558
Training Works	3,000

Indirect Support Generated \$ 100,558