

**West Kootenay Women's Association
Interim Report to Status of Women Canada
April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000**

IMPACTS OF PROJECT

1. Specific changes resulting from project

1.1 Changes to recruitment processes of major construction projects

Keenleyside Powerplant Project (KPP)

- 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 KPP.
 - 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.

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 Keenleyside Powerplant Project

- Influenced the development of a “women's liaison” function for women working on the KPP construction site, carried out by the (female) First Nations Coordinator for Peter Kiewit Sons Co. Ltd. (project contractor)

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 Keenleyside Powerplant Project.

2. Other major achievements of project

2.1 Community-based advisory committee. A 22 person advisory committee has been established, with a focus on high profile, key individuals from diverse geographic communities and sectors as well as potential funding partners and equity groups. The breadth of mix includes First Nations, health, government, small business, training, education, manufacturing, forestry, community advocacy, childcare, women's organizations, financial services, seniors and trade unions. Committee members were selected from as diverse a geographic cross-section as possible. There are members from the communities of Trail, Fruitvale, Rossland, Castlegar, Nelson, Blewett, Nakusp, South Slocan, Salmo and Kaslo. The composition of the advisory committee reflects the priority focus of the project on influencing systemic change. There is an emphasis on having individuals with broad community knowledge, credibility and influence – individuals who have a sense of how their sector may respond to the issue and whose public support for employment equity may help raise its profile. Also, participation in the advisory committee may increase members' attention to employment equity issues in their own organizations.

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 and awareness of employment equity
 - Recruitment and hiring policies and practices
 - Workforce retention policies and practices, including harassment policies
 - Training provided in equity related issues
 - Employment equity success stories, role models and resources to share
 - Needs related to employment equity, e.g. information, trainers, networking
- Obtained copies of best practice resources including:
 - Harassment policies
 - Codes of conduct
 - Employment Equity Action Plans
 - Library listing of human resource management books, videos etc.
 - Worker education materials
 - Collective agreement clauses pertaining to equity
 - Local trainers in diversity, harassment and other equity issues
- Compiled research results
- Obtained communications consultant advice re. promoting best practices through the media.

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.

2.4 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.
- Next steps re. utilization of data depend upon prioritization of strategies for 2000/2001. Statistics will be used to the extent that they support the project goals of effecting positive systemic change.

2.5 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.

2.6 Presentations to Groups

- The coordinator made presentations to the following groups:
 - Women’s Ad Hoc Committee to the Columbia Basin Trust
 - Board of Directors of Columbia Basin Trust
 - Women’s Employment Advisory Council

2.7 Grassroots Communication to Women

- The following grassroots communication took place this year:
 - Articles in six issues of the WKWA Newsletter
 - Information display at the WK Women’s Festival, August, 1999
 - Presentation to annual general meetings of WKWA and Kootenay WITT
 - Information on human resource best practices and career choice for youth, prepared for International Women’s Day display tables.

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

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.

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.
- The non-judgmental approach has strength because it is strategic. This means:
 - a shared understanding of the feminist ideal of equity by the core group (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),
 - selection of advisors who can give the project what it needs to achieve its results,
 - 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.

3.3 Priorities defined by the community

- The Advisory Committee’s input resulted in significant changes to the project’s direction than proposed in the grant submission.
- The core group 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.

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 have 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.

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 Keenleyside Powerplant 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 KPP through assisting the development of an equity coordinator function.
- The project has not undertaken advocacy with municipalities or crown corporations regarding the development of equity policies. We have developed an excellent working relationship with the Columbia Power Corporation. We intend to develop strategic partnerships with the Columbia Basin Trust and other key players in the second year of the project. The nature of the partnerships is not yet known and will be open to discussion.

5.3 Formal evaluation by Steering Committee

- The Steering Committee has provided a written evaluation as follows:

What are the most important contributions the project has made to date?

- Equity coordination function established at the Keenleyside Powerplant Project
- The composition of the Advisory Committee and the way it shows that employment equity is taken seriously
- The “best practices” research
- Securing funding for broad advertising of employment equity (when we advertised for resumes in regard to Keenleyside we indirectly advertised the existence of this project).

What are some areas where you see room for improvement? What would you like to see happen?

- Increased contact between the coordinator and the steering committee.
- Increased promotion so that the systemic changes are made more visible.
- Expanding the context of the employers research to find examples of subtle work-culture situations that impact equity.

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 last year?

- 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's work in relation to the Keenleyside Powerplant Project has moved slowly but has realized a more significant achievement than we had expected.

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

- Advisory committee meetings to review progress and suggest next steps
- Steering committee review of community advice and approval of directions for the second half of the project

Any other comments relevant to an evaluation of this project:

- The project has already done a lot to advance employment equity and make equity issues more visible.
- A flexible approach has allowed us to make the most possible progress in areas of systemic change.

5.4 Informal acknowledgment or evaluation by Advisory Committee, WKWA Coordinating Collective

- The Advisory Committee met in three groups during March, 2000 to assess progress to date and suggest next steps. Advisory committee members expressed appreciation for the good work of the project.
- The WKWA Coordinating Collective expressed its appreciation for the work of the project at its February meeting.

6. Sharing Project Results

As per the recommendation of the steering committee, 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 involve the steering committee's review of advisory committee input and approval of directions for the second half of the project.

8. Financial Reports

TABLE 1 – Budget vs. Actual – SWC Funding

Item	Budget ²	Actual
Travel	\$ 600.00	\$ 824.00
Publicity	\$ 800.00	\$ 0.00
Salaries	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 19,670.38
Honouraria	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Facilities	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
Materials	\$ 400.00	\$ 514.88
Other/ Phone	\$ 800.00	\$ 504.15
TOTAL	\$ 24,400.00	\$ 23,313.41
SURPLUS		\$ 1,086.59
SWC Funding Provided	\$ 26,000.00	
Funds available to carry forward	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1086.59

TABLE 2 – Proposed SWC Budget for 2000/2001

Item	Budget as per Sept. 1999	New proposed budget
Travel	\$ 400.00	\$ 600.00
Publicity	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 2,000.00
Salaries ³	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,329.62
Honouraria	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Facilities	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
Materials	\$ 300.00	\$ 456.97
Other/ Phone	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
TOTAL	\$ 24,600.00	\$ 25,686.59
SWC Funding to be provided	\$ 23,000.00	
Funds carried forward		\$ 2,868.59

² Table 1 is based upon the revised budget submitted September 7, 1999

³ It is proposed to carry forward the under-spent amount for salaries and apply it directly to salaries in 2000/2001.