

This is a fragment of material from the Employment Equity Project of the WKWA from the late 1990s, early 2000s. I believe it was written by Ruth Beck, the coordinator of WKWA's project.

And Lana Grant, the First Nations Coordinator for Keenleyside.

You are probably aware that people of the region have worked long and hard to let the Columbia Basin Trust and others know that employment on the hydro projects should provide work for local people in a mix that fairly represents the local population's demographics and an acknowledgement of area First Nations. To put employment equity into practice, equity language was incorporated into the Collective Agreement between the Columbia Hydro Constructors and the Allied Hydro Council ( a grouping of 17 construction trade unions). The Collective Agreement governs all hiring for on-site work at the Keenleyside project. However, as we have been finding out, equity language doesn't translate to equity hire unless action is taken to ensure compliance.

Last year, some construction work at the Brilliant Dam achieved equity Participation of 8%, which was above the targets set but which is still a low rate of participation. Staff at the Columbia Power Corporation did a lot of work to get women out on the project. The process is different at Keenleyside – it's up to the Columbia Hydro Constructors and the unions. When we arrived on the scene, there were 4 or 5 women on site out of 140, or about 3%.

In just over 2 weeks, we identified over 120 interested women and for 40 of the most qualified women, provided them with an opportunity for a site tour, an introduction to WITT and a face-to-face meeting with representatives of Peter Kiewit Sons Co. Ltd (Keenleyside's design-build contractor) and the unions. What emerged in the meeting is that the route a qualified woman should take to get employment at Keeleyside is about as clear a mud. Its better in some occupational areas than others, but its complex and equity is getting lost in the mix.

What is clear is that the organizing effort needs to continue by getting an Equity Integration Committee set up, just as there was on the Island Highway construction project. That committee needs to set equity targets and monitor compliance