

**BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS PROGRAM
WOMEN IN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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Women in Resource Development Committee (WRDC) is an incorporated group committed to economic equality and employment equity for women in the natural resource development sector. WRDC expresses that commitment through research, program development, identification of barriers to women's participation in industry, improved awareness and access to training for women, and the creation of alliances with industry and community. The activities of WRDC are supported by the Labour Market Development Agreement, the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Agreement, Status of Women Canada, Government of Canada, and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador through Human Resources and Employment, and Mines and Energy.

The Untapped Resource project encourages women to consider training for careers in the natural resource development sector, it is raising awareness among women of the options available to them, and is working to create a learning environment that addresses the needs of women. Under the Untapped Resource, WRDC delivers the **Orientation to Trades and Technology** program in partnership with the College of the North Atlantic. This is a twenty-four week program offering women an opportunity to explore occupations in the resource industries and to experience the elements of the training required. Within the Orientation to Trades and Technology, is a one week Petroleum Industry Orientation delivered by the Petroleum Industry Outreach Coordinator. In the next year WRDC will deliver seven more programs throughout the province. The Untapped Resource program is funded by the Labour Market Development Agreement through Human Resources Development Canada. WRDC also receives a grant from Human Resources and Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, to finance the participation of non-Employment Insurance eligible women in the Orientation to Trades and Technology program.

Breaking Down the Barriers program focuses on increasing women's participation in the oil and gas industry. This program works with women to raise their awareness of occupations in the petroleum industry, and offers support to those who seek training and employment there. Through the work of the Petroleum Industry Outreach Coordinator, the program is building partnerships with industry and training institutions to development awareness and activities aimed at decreasing barriers to recruitment and retention of women in the petroleum industry. Breaking Down the Barriers is financed by the Offshore Skills Training Fund of the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Development Fund.

WRDC is representative of a global wave of awareness. Programming encouraging participation of women in oil and gas activities exists in many countries, rich and poor, awareness is growing. The activities and ideas that we promote are shared with groups in countries on all continents.

The development of oil and gas resources is a relatively new industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been in exploration and development phase for many years and now shows signs of sustained momentum. We have one producing field, another progressing through its development phase, and two others under consideration by their owner groups. Support

industries are establishing with hopeful long term views.

As a province we are adjusting to this new economic engine and are in the process of social adjustment, building infrastructure and laying the ground work for our full involvement. Women in Resource Development Committee shares in the recognition of the importance to our community of this industry as it builds and defines itself in this province. As representatives of the greater community, we support this effort and want to see the momentum of the petroleum industry go forward with the best impact for this community. At the same time, we are concerned that women in Newfoundland and Labrador benefit directly from this industry. We encourage the stakeholders to work together to craft and maintain a balance of economics, social justice and sustainability.

Program Focus

Women in Resource Development Committee, Through Breaking Down the Barriers, has identified three areas of activity that will influence the movement of women into the new oil and gas industry. These are:

- Building an awareness and confidence among women of their options for training and employment;
- Working with education and training institutions to recruit and retain females into the heavily male-dominated trades and technology courses, and
- Developing policy and programming regarding employment and retention of women.

With this focus it is clear that post secondary institutions, government, labour, and industry all play fundamental roles in the work, and therefore it is essential they adopt a commitment to successful, results oriented policy.

Post Secondary Institutions

In Newfoundland and Labrador at this time women who consider training options most often 'self deselect' from many trades and technology training programs and occupations. In addition, women have limited knowledge of the petroleum industry and even less information on careers and training for the industry. Some factors that contribute to this circumstance are the lack of public awareness of the industry, the characteristics within industry itself that make it difficult for outsiders to find clear information, and our own culture that in its expression often discourages women. Training and educational institutions are an important focus area and WRDC is engaging partnerships that recognize the necessity of a long term view and long term programming to address the knowledge and accessibility issues.

There is a need for knowledge and training for industry and government personnel regarding women's issues and employment equity issues. The system needs to prepare and adapt to accommodate women, and there is a real need for focussed recruitment, keeping in view, that general recruiting practices have not attracted female candidates in any significant numbers. We know that terms such as "*gender balance*" and "*equal opportunity*" do not result in equal access or equal representation.

The numbers of women in the male dominated courses in the Provincial college system are extremely low. At this time, female applications for the male dominated programming ranges from 0%- 6%. Graduate numbers for electrical programs for 2000 range from 2/32 to 2/29. The scenario is similar for many other male dominated courses. Very few women are applying, the system is not conducting focussed recruiting, and women will not be trained and prepared for the trades and technological occupations in this new petroleum industry, or in any other industry. Without an increase in women's enrollment the landscape of the work force will not change significantly in the coming years. WRDC is working with the college system to improve these odds.

I would like to note, the one female enrolled in Electrical Engineering Technology, Instrumentation Option, was made aware of the occupation and encouraged to train by WRDC. We hope two others will apply for the program in the next year. We are now more certain of the need for networking and mentoring programs to support industry entrants.

Government

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador is in the process of building "an integrated approach to social and economic development". Our government is firmly focussed on establishing a petroleum industry in this province and hesitates to take action that might slow the momentum. In planning and related initiatives it is important that the government bring to the table a gender based analysis, highlighting the issues specific to women in Newfoundland and Labrador. It, also, is important that industry planners and regulators understand and accept the thinking that equal treatment has not resulted in equal representation, special measures are needed. WRDC is involved in discussions with government through a variety of structures to promote these ideas.

Labour

WRDC has initiated discussion with organized labour on issues of women's entry to the union shops. Here, also, there are systemic barriers. Organized labour has a significant role to play in promoting and supporting women's entry into the construction and fabrication activity of the petroleum industry. An increase in apprenticeship availability will have a great effect on employment success. There is much work to be done to remove the barriers in this area.

Industry

WRDC has had some success in opening dialogue and garnering support for women's issues in the oil and gas industry and related industries. The presence of WRDC has influenced understanding and is bringing women's employment issues to the fore. WRDC is raising the domestic and international issue of retention of female employees in the industry. There is hesitation to translate corporate policies into practical, goal orientated programming. This reticence is evident in a lack of commitment to keeping gender disaggregated data, measuring, monitoring and evaluating investment in equity programs. Also, policy does not necessarily flow from owner/operators to operations level contractors, and there are few incentives to fulfill contractor equity obligations. As in the greater Canadian market, projects must stand alone and prove financial viability, and there are financial and time pressures which are magnified on the East Coast and which place a short term outlook and immediacy to all operations planning.

Petroleum Industry Related Initiatives

Women in Resource Development Committee is active in its petroleum industry outreach; the results have been a wide range of partnership activities through out the province. WRDC is continuing to building alliances that will result in programming to further address the three focus areas of the Breaking Down the Barriers program.

- **Petroleum Industry Information Sessions** WRDC offers petroleum industry information sessions for community groups and individuals, this has been an ongoing initiative. These sessions include a discussion of the petroleum industry structure, technical explanations, employment opportunities, related training and experience requirements.
- **Orientation To Trades and Technology** Within the twenty four week *Orientation to Trades and Technology* is a week long petroleum industry orientation. The Petroleum Industry Outreach Coordinator delivers this session. The week offers expanded and detailed information on the industry opportunities. It includes guest speakers, field trips and delivery of a technical session which has been developed in consultation with industry partners.
- **Career Awareness in Schools** WRDC is working with Mobil Canada to develop career awareness programming for school age girls. The structure of this initiative would offer career exploration with mentors, and would provide opportunities for information sharing in schools and communities.
- **Employment Data Collection** We are conducting an informal survey of the local industry players to identify where and how many women are employed in male-dominated or non-traditional occupations in Newfoundland's oil and gas sector. The survey is called *Where are the Women?*
- **Industry Support** WRDC is in discussion with operating companies regarding support for project development. Supply and service industry players have expressed their willingness to contribute to programming that would offer work experience for women.
- **Liaison with Marine Institute** The Petroleum Industry Outreach Coordinator works with Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland in an advisory capacity to assist them in their efforts to recruit women in Marine Engineering and Nautical Science Programs.
- **Networking** WRDC participates in reviews of industry initiatives, strategic planning and in a variety of community efforts. WRDC is an active member of the Newfoundland Ocean Industries Association.

Conclusion

The oil and gas industry is quickly becoming a significant player in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. As the industry builds and we expand our awareness, it is more apparent than ever that women's social and economic well being can be improved if they are able to participate in the development of natural resources and reap direct benefits.

A review of data from 1968 indicated women represented 2% of trades and craft occupations; in 2000 the numbers are 2%-6%. That is an improvement of 4% in 34 years. At this pace we will reach 'critical mass', that is 33%, in the year 2230. Without a deliberate focus on women it is conceivable that the status quo will continue well into the new millennium. WRDC will continue to work with the stakeholders to promote women's employment equity as an integral element to petroleum development, an element equal in importance to engineering design and royalty regimes.

