

W05: OUTREACH PROGRAMS SUCCESSFUL WITH GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Time: 1.5 hours

Leaders: Monique Frize and Jennifer Flanagan

THE PATHMAKERS PROGRAM

The program has kept its original objective since its creation in 1986: “Preparing Today for Tomorrow”. The primary purpose is to encourage young people, especially girls and young women, to consider careers in engineering and related sciences and technology programs. This is accomplished by developing communication bridges between the female students (Pathmakers) presently involved in post-secondary science, technology and engineering study programs and prospective students in elementary and secondary schools. The Pathmakers volunteers act as strong role models for young students and accomplish several objectives related to the primary purpose of the program. They include: Sparking the students' interest through their personal stories of following a career path in these fields and provoking excitement and wonder through interactive demonstrations and hands-on experiments; contributing to the elimination of stereotypes surrounding science and engineering careers and gender roles that limit choices to traditional careers; conveying the message to stay in school, to continue taking science, technology and mathematics courses and to explore career opportunities for future economic independence and an interesting job; informing young students about the opportunities in the job market and encourage them to become well-rounded, educated adults; encouraging young women to consider non-traditional fields so that they can become the scientists and engineers of tomorrow. Emphasis is placed on fields where the job market is strong (ex. IT sector).

The benefits of the Pathmakers program are far reaching and impact on all of the parties involved including: The students in elementary or secondary school benefit by learning about new and exciting careers; girls and young women gain confidence and interest to pursue post-secondary education and to pursue a non-traditional career in science, technology or engineering; special emphasis is placed on demonstrating how competent girls and women can be in this type of study program and work. The role models are live demonstrations of this reality; teachers gain new ideas, resources and teaching methods and the presentations help enrich the science curriculum and the career guidance program; Pathmakers realize their importance as role models for young people; they are an inspiration and a catalyst for the success of the next generation; they gain valuable communication, inter-personal and presentation skills that will be useful for their career. The workshop will discuss this program and related activities in the region and the large impact these have had on the enrolment of women in local engineering programs.

YES-VACC

Youth Engineering and Science - Virtual Adventures Camps Canada (YES-VACC) is a federally incorporated, not-for-profit organization and a registered charity. YES-VACC is an award-winning, nationally respected organization that represents a community of 26 Member programs across three Canadian coasts, from Victoria, to Iqaluit, to St. John's.

YES-VACC Members offer a rich variety of educational programs to enrich and expand the Science¹ experiences of students, teachers and the community at large. The goal of creating an enthusiasm and appreciation for the opportunities in the Science fields is accomplished through summer day camps, school workshops, teacher training and community outreach programs. In 1999, over 215,000 young Canadians participated in YES-VACC programs.

YES-VACC is strongly committed to bringing our programs to every young Canadian. Projects and activities are developed with care to ensure their relevance to a diverse audience of youth. Several specialized programs have been created nationally to respond to this important need.

NATIONAL GENDER ISSUES PROGRAM

Launched in 1997 as a national strategy to increase the participation rate of girls at YES-VACC day camps, the National Gender Issues Program has become a dynamic collection of programs and awareness building activities being delivered across Canada.

The National Gender Issues Program is built on the strong infrastructure and expertise of the YES-VACC community to deliver high quality, interactive programs. Gender issues training is being delivered to every staff Member across Canada by leading experts in the field. The core activities of the National Gender Issues Program include all-girls summer day camps, residential programs for girls and science clubs for girls. A critical part of this initiative is creating opportunities across Canada for parents, schools, community groups, government and industry to become involved in taking action to ensure the participation of girls in science and technology. In 2000, YES-VACC will establish a strong infrastructure to support the girls programs, to increase community involvement and to strengthen our advocacy component.

The workshop will provide an overview of the building blocks and components of the National Gender Issues Program as well as the YES-VACC community based delivery model. The wide implications and benefits of these efforts across Canada will be discussed and the action plan for advocacy and communication surrounding this issue will also be presented. The workshop will finish with suggestions for getting involved in local YES-VACC initiatives.