

Women Excelling in Trades: Their Support and Hardships

Despite trades being a male dominated workforce, many women are excelling in the field. The trades unions offer many programs, grants and conferences to aid development and recruitment of women in the field. Many of these successful women have taken advantage of these resources as they have risen through the ranks. Discrimination against women is not usually intentional and it is up to everyone to do their part in supporting women in trades.

Angela Gismondi wrote an article for Daily Commercial News (ConstructConnect) about the experiences of two women in the trades who acted as panel speakers at the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum's *Supporting Women in the Trades* Conference. One of the women Angela listened to, Alyssa Crewe, a member of SDP in Newfoundland, has had a proud hand in multiple "history making" (CITATION) jobs in Newfoundland. Angela highlighted Alyssa's inspiring comment that "a woman's voice can and will be heard on a construction site." (CITATION) Alyssa's success paves the way for future women, however she noted that the trades don't necessarily recognize that women have different needs. Alyssa insinuates that being in the trades may add difficulties to parenthood by working long hours away from home, therefore not always being available for her child.

Angela Gismondi's also heard the story of Antonia Wareham, a welder apprentice in Nova Scotia. Antonia's success could be partially attributed to her having taken advantage of an educational program with Women Unlimited, which focussed on supporting, educating and providing a space for networking for women (CITATION). Antonia's involvement in the program led her to continue her education up until her current position working on building ships for the Canadian Navy, where she appreciates that the ships will be in use for "at least 40 years." Antonia urges other women to ignore the gender imbalance and persevere to succeed in trades and states, "we as women, we can do anything as long as we put our mind to it." (CITATION)

Though a prominently male workforce, trades supply plenty of resources for women to facilitate their success. Obstacles for women can be minimized through education and proper resources for both women and men alike. Trade unions actively seek to increase the number of women in the trades work force and support gender equality; Many women in the field are excelling in leadership positions thanks to union support.

In addition to trade union support, the importance of women in the trades are being recognized on a government level as well; Gender equality was a key issue in the Canadian Federal Budget released in early 2018. In his budget speech, Finance Minister Bill Morneau noted "Over the last 40 years, the rising number of women participating in the work force has accounted for about a third of Canada's real GDP per capita growth." (CITATION) His budget speech further noted the importance of gender equality for women but also for Canada, recognizing that successful Canadian women results in a better economy in general. The Federal government has made it a priority to address gender inequality and their allocation of funds and resources into new programs supporting women in the trades (and women in business in general) is a great start.

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters released a report in 2017 stating that women hold a mere 4.5 per cent of jobs in the skilled trades. This figure has been steadfast over the course of several years. Trade unions are working to change this stagnate figure. LIUNA (Labourers' International Union of North America) Local 183 has called their women-only construction craft worker program "Phase 1" of their partnership with Aecon Women in the Trades program. The eight-week program based out of Vaughn,

north of Toronto, ran for eight weeks in the Spring of 2019 and the twelve female apprentices attending are committed to completing all conditions required to obtain Red Seal certification. CMAW Canada (Construction Maintenance and Allied Workers of Canada) at their 2018 CMAW Convention unanimously passed a resolution: Therefore Let it Be Resolved that CMAW support the formation of a women's member committee to address issues regarding recruitment, retention, and support of women in the trades. (CITATION) It is this sort of commitment from trades unions that will make the difference in increasing the ridiculously low percentage of women participating in the trades currently. It is evident that Unions are working hard to change the status quo and create environments where women can succeed in a trades career.

Respectfully submitted by:

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<https://canada.constructconnect.com/ioc/news/associations/2018/03/women-building-futures-related-federal-budget-gender-equality-focus>

<https://www.bdo.ca/en-ca/insights/tax/federal-and-provincial-budgets/2018/federal-budget-2018-highlights/>

<https://canada.constructconnect.com/dcn/news/labour/2018/11/workshop-launches-cawics-womens-leadership-program?fbclid=IwAR0zvNoDArQpyH00-TRth2PM1ev7mZeSfJYbu9JD0yHiboWrP4z0ktesnkw>

<https://canada.constructconnect.com/dcn/news/labour/2019/08/aecon-liuna-join-forces-women-trades-program>

Women of C.M.A.W. facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/600336930387987/>