

Final Report on ITAC Education and Advocacy Project for Kootenay WITT, WETC and the Ministry of Women's Equality, October 1997:

My work began on the ITAC issue when, as a member of the Provincial Apprenticeship Board, representing equity advocacy issues, I spoke up at the initial report from the Minister's Committee on Governance at the November Board meeting. Several members of the PAB sat on the Minister's Committee. I said that I felt equity issues had not been well considered, and that the context to address equity issues was missing from their report. I was assured by then Deputy Minister George Ford that "of course it would be effectively dealt with and included." It came up again and again at subsequent Board meetings, and each time, I was assured it would be included in the final report. When the semi-final report came out on February 11, Equity was not included. I asked that my deep concerns be clearly stated in the Minutes, and I said that I was now being forced to break ranks with the Board and deal with the issue in a political fashion.

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I met privately in February with the Minister of Women's Equality while she was in the Kootenays, and this was one of the issues under discussion, and I asked her for her active support on the ITAC issues.

Also in February, I sent a very strong letter to the Ministers responsible, still as member of the PAB, calling the governments commitment to equity into question. As a result, when the Final Report on Governance came out, the "duty to consult with equity seeking groups" and "incorporate their issues into the ITAC agenda" was included. As well, "that membership within the business, labour, education/training and government constituencies will reflect equity and equity seeking groups and endorse principles of inclusiveness" was included. While this development was welcome, it was not in any way sufficient. There was nothing in the Mandate and Responsibilities, no specific equity advocacy representation, and while 7 Standing Committees were named, an Equity Committee was not among them. I sent an additional letter suggesting that this matter should be going through the Gender Lens of the Ministry of Women's Equality.

The reply was a phone call from the new Deputy Minister, Marg Arthur, during which I clearly stated my concerns and outlined the means to alleviate them as the legislation was being drafted. She told me it was too late to change the legislation. I told her it had not yet been reviewed under the Gender Lens.

My first major contact with the community on the issue of ITAC was on March 19th when I sent out a letter to the WETC, from Kootenay WITT, to be read at their meeting and sent out with their minutes, informing them of the situation. Kootenay WITT also initiated discussions on a Speaking Up and Speaking Out grant from the Ministry of Women's Equality.

April 1st, I sent a letter to the Minister of Women's Equality, formally asking for her assistance on this issue, and to fast track the Speak Up and Speak Out so that we might get to work with the larger equity community in mid-April.

The PAB Equity Committee met, after considerable resistance from Don Cott, ADM - Labour, to review all of the Board's recommendations on equity since 1993, and send any outstanding issues to the new ITAC Commission. There were 51 recommendations passed by the PAB during that time. Only two had been accomplished, and two others had had some work done on them. There was clearly resistance from the Administrators of Apprenticeship.

Early in April, I became aware that WETC was not sending out minutes to a wide audience, due to cost and time restrictions, and that WETC still had not been successful in getting their meeting with the Deputies of Labour, MOEST, and Women' Equality, that the Ministers of those Ministries had committed to in March of last year. As well, the Federal/Provincial negotiations on training were all of a sudden proceeding very quickly from the standstill at which they had been for a long time. Due to my position on the Provincial Apprenticeship Board, I was party to updates and information regarding this agreement, and was able to provide effective background information and resources to those in at the bargaining table, including the suggestion that the Federal Designated Group Policy be adapted by the Province.

In mid-April, I attended a WETC meeting, at my own expense, in New Westminster and briefed those in attendance, as well as meeting with members of WITT. WETC and LM WITT nominated me to sit on the interim ITAC Board until a process could be set in place for an effective nomination process. It was important to have their support and action ideas. We decided to move forward on four issues with the ITAC process:

- 1) There is no mention of equity in the mandate and responsibilities of this commission, responsible for entry level training, apprenticeship and industrial training.
- 2) There is no equity representation specified, nor is there specification for representation from groups advocating for equity group issues. (The only mention of equity in the document came after my initial letters to the Ministers)
- 3) There is no Equity Committee mentioned in the standing and ad hoc committees. (There has been a Standing Committee on Equity that has made a number of recommendations that were passed by the Board, and have still, several years later, never been acted upon.)
- 4) There is a need to incorporate the Designated Group Policy in both Federal and Provincial training policies and practices, and the Federal/Provincial Training Agreement seems like a good place to start.

I also received a letter from the Deputy Minister of Labour telling me, addressed to Journeywomen Ventures Ltd, (the position from which I sit on the PAB), that the "Minister's Committee" discussed the issue of equity representation at some length" and decided against equity advocacy representation, and to "compel key partners to appoint representatives that reflect the demographic face and address equity as key objectives of the commission". I responded strongly and clearly, as an advocate from Kootenay WITT, "twelve white men and one white woman discussing the issue of equity representation at some length' does not leave me with a good deal of confidence in your process"; that there was nothing about equity in the Mandate, and leaving it in the hands of business, labour, education and government to consult would result in a continued status quo.

The Speak Up and Speak Out contract with Women's Equality that funded this mailout took an inordinate amount of time for something that was supposed to assist in dealing with "emergent issues". For an issue as timely and important as this one, the red tape was a real barrier.

Kootenay WITT then put together a mail-out to be sent to our lists and WETC's provincial lists to inform our larger constituencies of the issues and invite those interested in or able to get actively involved to a meeting in Vancouver in mid-June. This went out to approximately 278 individuals and groups around the Province. I also sent copies of all correspondence to date to

the Premier, asking him to intervene.

With the pressure of the imminent tabling of this flawed legislation, I wrote to Paul Ramsey, Minister of Education Skills and Training asking for a meeting while I would be in Victoria to discuss a number of policy and program issues. That meeting was rejected. I met with Corky Evans, my MLA, and, by chance, with Penny Priddy, previous Minister of Women's Equality, and they both agreed to intervene in whatever ways they could find.

I took the opportunity of being in Victoria to meet with Deborah Pearce, a columnist for the Times Colonist who has a very good understanding of these issues. I shared the correspondence as well as the Minister's Committee on Governance document, with her. She did some of her own research, talking to the Chair, Lee Doney and started to write an article.

Minister Ramsey had sent me an e-mail saying he was sorry he couldn't meet, but he hoped I had been able to get my issues dealt with. I made a quick reply to say that "No, I had not got my issues dealt with" and expressed in strong language my concern about the way the government was dealing with Equity issues on ITAC.

Three days later, his ministerial assistant called and said he was to make himself available to get a clear picture on my concerns and try to resolve them. We agreed to meet the following day, May 29, 1997, in Vancouver at Cabinet Offices.

The meeting with Lionel Yipp went very well. What was supposed to be an hour meeting, turned into one hour and forty-five minutes, due to the intelligent questions Mr. Yipp continued to ask. He received a briefing on the history of Canada's and British Columbia's response to dealing with employment/training issues from the beginning of the Labour Force Development Strategy through to the present situation, including the CLMPC Task Forces; the development of the CLFDB and its Committees and Task Forces; the BCLFDB and the Equity Members and Reference Groups of all of those; the National Apprenticeship Committee; the Provincial Apprenticeship Board, its members and motions; the Equity efforts of his Ministry through the work of Elizabeth Carriere; and a full briefing on the issues surrounding the proposed ITAC legislation. It is true that there is no one else in the country from whom he could have received the breadth and depth of experience with all of the above, and Mr. Yipp took solid advantage of the opportunity to get a full briefing. He responded with understanding of the Equity issues throughout, but said at the end that though the issues were of concern, "it was probably too late to change the legislation before it was tabled, but the Government can always amend its own legislation." I then told him with a very strong voice, "if you allow this legislation to go forward as it is, the message you will be sending to the public about this government's commitment to equity will be clear. You had better change this legislation before it is tabled."

He asked where I would be so that he could contact me in the next week. I was on my way to a conference in Halifax and then to visit a friend in NY on the way home. I gave him the bed & breakfast number in Halifax and my friend's number in NY.

I followed up with Deborah on the results of that meeting, and we decided to go ahead with the article, as time was short and it was unclear what was going to come of Lionel's efforts. Deborah's excellent article appeared on June 3rd, where she succinctly framed the issues for the public, and left room for the government to modify its position. Not all journalists are as politically astute.

While in Halifax at the ACCC Conference, I had the opportunity to have a discussion with John Harper, President of AECBC, and one of the “12 white men and one white woman” on the Minister’s Committee on ITAC. When asked what his response had been to my letter, he said he had never seen it, and reiterated that when I gave him a copy. It was interesting that I had received a letter from Marg Arthur, DM - Labour, telling me that the Committee members had all received my letter.

The following Wednesday, 10 minutes after I walked in the door in NY at 9:30 PM, Lionel was on the phone with the news that Women’s Equality had, that afternoon, been at the table with Labour and MOEST at the Minister and DM level, and they had “resolved most of the issues WITT had identified.” “Can I see it in writing?” I asked. “Well, you didn’t get absolutely everything you asked for...but....” It was a mark of his good character that he had called, that he had worked to bring that meeting to pass, and that they had achieved as much as they did:

- ✓ increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in designated trades and designated occupations - built into the Mandate of the Commission
- ✓ appointments of business, labour and education would reflect designated group members but no seat for equity advocacy except a government seat for the Ministry of Women’s Equality

Lionel suggested that it would require:

- ✓ include measurable goals and objectives for the Commission respecting under-represented groups and diversity
- ✓ be held accountable through an annual reporting process that will have budgeting consequences.

On Friday, June 20th, I received a briefing on the legislation about to be tabled legislation from Dan Barret, the Minister of Labour’s Ministerial Assistant. (This after a great deal of being put off by Paul Ramsey’s other MA as Lionel was out of town. Luckily, Lionel had left clear notes in his file and I was able to convince the guy to go and look.) It was going to be in the Mandate. There was no change in the equity advocacy representation issue.

Strategy sessions were held at WETC’s June 18th meeting by speakerphone; June 21st at Douglas College in New Westminster with 11 women present from around the province (others wanted to be there but couldn’t on that date); and June 27th with WEAC. These were both information and strategy sessions, with the details of activities discussed and confirmed and outlined in our minutes. The subjects were ITAC, the Designated Group Policy, and the Federal/Provincial Training Agreement. Very specific strategies around initiatives ITAC could be undertaking were discussed at the same time as framing the process to move these issues forward. Additional to that were specifics such as WITT exploratory courses, and the 51 recommendations that had received so little action from the Ministry, and the potential for collaboration around the Fed/Prov Agreement.

Information was shared and ongoing priorities and strategies were developed to move us forward from what we had already achieved. Almost all those at the meetings took it upon themselves to write letters in aid of this.. In the weeks following, individually written letters went

out, documenting the participants concerns in their own words.

On June 21st, at a meeting of the Advanced Education Council of British Columbia, John Harper, a member of the Minister's Committee on ITAC, questioned me as to whether there had been any progress on the issue we had discussed the previous week in Halifax. When I told him it was in the Mandate, his response was that they would now have to have a Standing Committee. I told him I hoped he was right!.

The Legislation was tabled on June 23, 1997, and the press release and article in the Vancouver Sun highlighted the equity mandate and provided some background, and announced the appointments of the Chair and the CEO. The CEO, Kerry Jothen, called me almost immediately, and asked for a meeting on his first day of work to discuss equity issues related to the Mandate. When I said that it would mean significant expense to change my travel plans, he agreed to cover those costs.

I prepared a great deal of background material to brief Kerry Jothen on Equity issues and how to solve them, using the strategies developed through the WITT/WETC Task Force on ITAC and the Designated Group Policy as they had come to be known. He indicated that he was interested in hiring an interim Equity Advisor position to assist the Commission to get a good start on the issue. He said that an out-of-service posting would take a long time and they will need an interim person.

Part of the briefing I gave him included the Elizabeth Carriere material that was part of the 51 Equity in Apprenticeship recommendations, and a description of the important role that she played. This was material I had already discussed with Lionel, and was grateful that consideration was being given to this position.

He followed up the next week with a request to assist with the development of the job description, and I indicated that I would be willing to review the material, but that I was not willing to do the development work for free.

I wrote to my MLA, with copies to all involved players, in hopes of getting some action on the representation issue, talking about opportunities that were presented as a result of the new Commission and how important it was to have voices at the table with knowledge and expertise, able to move equity issues forward.

During the next couple of weeks I worked very hard to get a meeting with Paul Ramsey and John Cashore, at the request of the WITT/WETC Task Force, to try to achieve success on the representation issue before the ITAC Legislation was passed, but to no avail. These ministers were tied up in estimates for weeks. The ITAC Legislation was passed "as is" on July 25, 1997, and the House rose almost immediately.

The politicians had done their work. The legislation does include as #4 in the Mandate: "to increase the proportion of under-represented groups in designated trades and designated occupations." It "may" consult with "groups of persons who are under-represented"; "may establish committees to carry out its powers and duties,,," and such a committee "may include individuals who are not members of the commission..". It may also establish Advisory Committees. This may mean it will establish a Standing Committee on Equity.

A conference call was held on August 6th, with representation from Lower Mainland WITT, Interior WITT, Kootenay WITT, South Island WITT, First Nations WETC, WETC, and Okanagan PeopleWorks where people were updated, informed of the Equity Advisor Position, and discussed the Designated Group Policy and Federal Provincial Training Agreement issues. It was decided, because several people were going to be in Vancouver or Victoria on August 18th, that we try to get a meeting, now that the legislation was passed, with the Bureaucrats who will be moving the issues forward from here. I agreed to set up separate meetings with Val Mitchell, DM - Women's Equality, who had been named to the Commission as a voting member; Kerry Jochen, CEO - ITAC, and Gail Thomas, Director of Federal/Provincial relations and member of the Co-Management Team working with the Feds on the Training Agreement. We would also ultimately need to speak to a number of the new Commissioners.

People also agreed to send letters to Pierre Pettigrew, Federal Minister of HRD regarding the Designated Group Policy, recognizing that it was EIC policy, and our hope that the policy would be reframed as other policies were being reframed, within the context of the HRDC environment and language, and that we would like confirmation that this was in fact the basis for the "equity principles" in the Fed/Prov Agreement.

We did achieve our meeting on August 18th, with both Kerry Jochen and Valerie Mitchell coming in to meet with us (at a Boardroom provided for the day by MWE) on their annual leaves. Valerie Mitchell had indicated she was most interested in meeting with us so that she might have the opportunity to bring the issues forward to the Commission in the most constructive manner. She asked for, received and read prior to the meeting, as set of briefing materials on our Task Force, the issues of concern and our suggested avenues of resolution, making our time together most productive.

Kerry Jochen tabled the list of Commissioners and the job description of the Equity Advisor position with the groups and asked for feedback on both the posting, and the method of distribution. We took time at the end of our day to collectively go over the material and make suggestions for adjustment. While everyone felt that it was a job I could walk into without any learning curve, and a fulfilment of much of the work I had been doing for many years, we decided to get as many good people as possible to send in resumès, to let them know the kind of expertise that exists in the community.

The meeting with Gail Thomas raised many questions about the different perspectives that were being presented by the Province and the Feds on the Training Agreement, and we were please that Gail had been invited to the WEAC meeting (A regular consultation meeting co-chaired by WETC and HRD at a senior level) in September.

In order to accommodate this meeting, the three sets of contracts had to be rewritten and re-signed twice, going to Victoria for approval, to enable moving \$1200 around to different categories in the \$10,000 budget, and extend the deadline for the projects end beyond August 15th, a date set when the tabling of the legislation was imminent last April. This was a cumbersome process for a very small amount of money being spent on a project where flexibility in responding to emergent situations is a key.

And the fact is, particularly in a project of this nature, the project didn't end even on August 30th. During the first three weeks of September, I received correspondence from the Premier, Glen

Clark, and from John Cashore, the Minister of Labour, responding to letters sent May 9th and February 14th respectively. The letters thanked me for my efforts and agreed with the premise upon which we based our project, and stated that not only was the government committed to equity in industrial training and apprenticeship to the point where they put it in the mandate, but they were putting in place an Equity Committee, would require from ITAC measurable goals and timetables, and would hold them accountable to those through an annual reporting process. They would also develop strategies to increase equity groups within their staff. The Premier's letter went on to describe a number of areas in which government would support active equity initiatives.

I also received a call from Susan Witter, ITAC Commissioner and President of Douglas College, saying that she had been appointed co-chair, with Valerie Mitchell, of the Equity Committee, and asking for a briefing on the issues. As it seemed self-defeating to say that our funding ran out on August 30th, I photocopied a great deal of material for her and phoned her to follow up with her questions.

On the 19th of September, I attended, with one other WITT/WETC Task Force member and a number of WETC members who had been following our work and sending letters, the WEAC meeting at HRDC in Vancouver, with Gail Thomas attending as well. Along with other agenda items, the ITAC issues and current state of resolution were described. We had experienced previous resistance from Shirley Robertson about the DGP policy, and she was not thrilled that we were still pursuing the matter, particularly with her Minister. She felt strongly that this was a policy of a previous regime/department, and that it did not apply in the current decentralized climate.

The WITT and WETC women around the table were extremely effective in framing the issues for her, and for Gail Thomas, stating the importance of having a document to use to educate all of those federal and provincial employees who would be asked to "respect equity principles" as they would be required to do under the Federal/Provincial Training Agreement. Each of us was eloquent in our own ways, and ultimately achieved a commitment on the part of both representatives that they would work to bring an updated framework for these purposes to the next WEAC meeting in December.

The ITAC Commission has been appointed, and it has approximately ½ female representation. While I know that there is one aboriginal man, I do not know what the breakdown is of other equity groups. The hiring process for the interim Equity Advisor is underway, and there is a shortlist of excellent serious candidates. There is an intention to make this a permanent position, creating an out-of-service posting for the long term. The external recruitment process for the initiating interim position was well done.

I believe we have proven, throughout the life of this project, (whether it fell within the framework of the time allotted by the granting process of MWE) that with incredible tenacity and perseverance, women can have an impact on the outcomes of policy decisions and legislation. As well, in the process, they can, with grace and candour, demonstrate the propriety and necessity of including a feminist analysis prepared by those who are affected by the potential changes. I feel strongly that we have provided a service to the government that will be felt for years to come. I appreciate that the government chose to listen, though, I regret, not to everything. I still strongly believe that even though it is in the Mandate in the legislation, and there is currently the political will to have a standing committee on equity to fulfill that mandate, the fact that equity advocacy groups were not given a place at the table leaves us vulnerable to

the whims of the political masters of the moment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the politicians of our time, who had the gumption to listen, and hear and make changes that were necessary to create an opening for those of us who have been disadvantaged by a dominant culture which does not encourage our participation in the industrial labour force: The Honourable Sue Hammell, The Honourable Paul Ramsey, The Honourable Glen Clark, The Honourable John Cashore, with assistance from the Honourable Corky Evans and The Honourable Penny Priddy.

A package has gone out to the larger WITT and WETC mailing lists documenting the elements that have been achieved, and sharing information about the federal/provincial training agreement, including the minutes of the meeting with Gail Thomas, which were amended and approved by her.

This project is a perfect example of the need for the Speak Up and Speak Out grants from the Ministry of Women's Equality, who cannot be in all places at all times on all issues. It is also textbook example of the process by which change can take place when being advocated from outside of government. This is a clear demonstration of the patience, tact and tenacity required to ask for what you want, persist in the face of resistance, not take no for an answer, and conduct a many pronged approach, while continuing to build alliances inside government and with community advocacy organizations and using those to develop the strategies needed to succeed. It is also a good example of community groups working with internal government advisors and bureaucrats, sometimes more successfully than at others.

The collective participation of diverse and dispersed groups work well, because telephone and written communication were well maintained, and the group had the opportunity to meet together in various configurations face-to-face. Many members of the Task Force acted independently to write articulate letters from their own experience. Participation in meetings with senior level bureaucrats provided role modelling and mentoring activities, and strategic planning practice.

I would strongly recommend that the Speak Up and Speak Out program be increased, that the amount of money available to do the work be increased, and that the red tape be modified to accommodate the flexibility needed to be successful without undue hardship on the sponsoring organization, often organizations without core funding who do very important education and advocacy work in communities.

There was not time or money within the scope of this project to establish a plan for follow-up participation, monitoring, and evaluation of the ongoing work of the Commission, a piece of work that will need to be done.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Braundy
VP - Kootenay WITT