

Employment Equity Project Activities - Sept. 2000 to March, 2001

1. Encouraging Equity Best Practices by Employers

Employers' Tool Kit for Equity – Web site with BC-wide promotion

An opportunity has emerged that may enable the “employers’ tool kit” to go on-line. The Kootenay Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada is supporting the use of identified funds for a project to develop a Web site with human resource best practices and equity information. Once approved, this Web site is expected to be developed through a project by the BC/Yukon Region of HRDC. It would be an integral part of the federal government’s on-line services for employers in the BC and Yukon region. The anticipated scope of the project will be to develop content for the Web site and conduct focus groups to determine the content needs. It is anticipated that project proposals will be solicited through a Request for Proposals process in the near future.

West Kootenay Outreach Recruitment Directory

Due to the changed nature of the “tool kit” project, there will be a separate and more modest distribution for the Outreach Recruitment Directory created for the West Kootenays. This will primarily be done through electronic means. It has already been used once by a group of provincial government ministries in our region.

Professional Development in Leadership, Equity and Diversity—An “Institute”?

The main focus over the last six months has been to identify opportunities to meet employers’ needs for professional development on equity, leadership and human resource management issues. Selkirk College and the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre work together on training and offer courses that meet local and regional needs. This includes bringing in “big name” speakers on leadership/equity if there is sufficient interest. To bring in a “big name” speaker, a number of local organizations would likely need to commit to purchase seats in advance. There have also been preliminary conversations with Selkirk College around the concept of a “summer institute on leadership, equity and diversity”.

The Employment Equity Coordinator and representatives of the College and Skills Centre made a presentation to the West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association (WKHRMA) on March 1. The WKHRMA members were interested in equity and identified the main barriers to action as:

- Not enough time
- Not knowing where to start to be more pro-active and effective with equity
- Having to convince others, especially decision-makers, about why equity has value
- Not believing that it is a big problem in their organizations
- Thinking that it might require too much time and money, especially at the start

One human resource manager asked if the Coordinator would be available to speak about the benefits of equity with senior management in his organization. The WKHRMA members were also interested in the professional development opportunities being offered by Selkirk College. This meeting has laid some groundwork towards building the network of equity-supportive HR managers, and has helped give them some motivation to take a leadership role.

2. Communication to the Public and Key Audiences

Success Stories in the Media

Two interview-style women's "success stories" have been written for publication in the West Kootenay Weekender. The first features Marilyn Luscombe and Helen Sebelius, CEOs of Selkirk College and KSA respectively. In the interview, Marilyn and Helen share their views on women's leadership styles, workplace discrimination, three generations of role models and the status of women in our society. A second interview highlights Laura Carter, a home-based career woman from Nelson who works as Assistant to the Secretary General of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation, headquartered in Brussels. A mother of two small children, Laura provides organizing and human rights support to (predominantly female) garment workers in countries all over the globe. Plans are to develop two to three more articles of this nature under contract with this writer. The Laura Carter interview should appear March 17.

3. Equity in Construction

Selkirk College Women in Trades and Technology Program

The Equity Coordinator assisted Selkirk College to submit a "14 point proposal" to offer a Women in Trades and Technology course starting in 2001. The proposal was created with participation from a group of stakeholders including representatives of equity groups, unions, industry, training agencies and government. The proposal has been submitted to the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission and the Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology. The Coordinator is lobbying local MLAs to ensure that the WITT course be funded as a core program (ie. annualized) so the College doesn't need to request funding over and over.

Columbia Basin Trust Task Force on Construction

The Trust has initiated a Task Force on Construction that focuses on training, apprenticeship and economic development. The Equity Coordinator made a written submission backed up by a verbal presentation at an initial meeting on February 9, 2001. The meeting had representatives of industry, labour, training agencies and equity groups. There was a relatively high level of agreement about the need to collaborate in order to ensure smooth workforce transition in trades and industrial work. There was a reasonable level of acceptance that equity needs to be part of the picture – the looming skills shortage makes equity a "must" for industry and labour.

Columbia Power Corporation confirms support for a Systemic Approach to Equity

The Equity Coordinator met with representatives of the CPC on Feb. 13. They were able to confirm funding for a 6 month extension of the Employment Equity Officer's contract at the Arrow Lakes Generating Station project. This doesn't complete the term of the project, but CPC has identified the need for a different approach to on-site facilitation of equity. The extension of the EEO position gives 6 months to create an alternative mechanism. The CPC also agreed to contribute \$10,000 towards a Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator, a position that would promote equity in construction and industry throughout the region.

Advocacy for Continued Support for Equity in Construction in the West Kootenays

The Equity Coordinator met with local MLAs on Feb. 26 to request their support for our equity in construction initiatives. The key elements of the request were:

- Annualized core funding for Selkirk College's WITT course;
- Funding for a Regional Equity Integration Facilitator.

The MLAs were very supportive and offered guidance about how to approach government with these proposals.

Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator

Given the challenges associated with promoting equity on individual construction worksites, we have shifted our focus to creation of a regional Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator to be housed in a neutral location. The Facilitator's role will be to coordinate an Equity Integration Committee, promote vocational opportunities in trades and technical areas, conduct outreach and act as a liaison person between training and employment. So far, Selkirk College has committed in-kind support valued at \$4,200, CPC has offered to contribute \$10,000 and we have written to Joan Smallwood, Minister of Labour, and the Columbia Basin Trust for \$10,000 each. Once this seed money has been secured, project sponsors will approach local stakeholders for partner contributions. This project helps move forward the ideas generated at the Trust's Construction meeting of February 9.

4. Linkages to Women's Health and Poverty Issues

WKWA's next Multi-Year Proposal to Status of Women Canada

The Equity Coordinator has assisted WKWA to develop its next multi-year project which will focus on women's economic equality and strategies to reduce poverty and its affects on women's lives. The geographic focus will be the Nelson area. The project expects to conduct participatory research and engage in planning and activities related to food, housing, health and other needs of women in poverty. The project has been successful in receiving three years of support from Status of Women Canada at the same level of funding as the current EE project.

Employment Equity Project Loose Ends -- March, 2001

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- Awaiting HRDC approval of funding and Request For Proposals. Equity Coordinator will help with creation of a project team and advisory committee to propose to HRDC.
- WKWA to receive electronic files of all documents produced to support this work – e.g. the Who's Doing What reports, Guidelines for Hiring a Diverse Workforce, Business Case for Equity

West Kootenay Outreach Recruitment Directory

- Electronic distribution to take place by March 31, 2001. WKWA to receive electronic file.

Professional Development in Leadership, Equity and Diversity—An “Institute”?

- Selkirk College, the Greater Trail Skills Centre and the West Kootenay Human Resource Management Association will carry the ball forward from this point on. This was discussed on March 1.

2. Communication to the Public and Key Audiences

Success Stories in the Media

- Writer to develop two to three more articles under contract. The timeline may need to extend past March 31.

3. Equity in Construction

Selkirk College Women in Trades and Technology Program

- Selkirk College is in the driver's seat now.

Columbia Basin Trust Task Force on Construction

Columbia Power Corporation confirms support for a Systemic Approach to Equity

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Labour and Equity Integration Facilitator

- The Equity Coordinator and representatives of Kootenay WITT will stay in touch with these initiatives and contribute small amounts of time, on an honourarium basis, when/if they are needed as a catalyst for next steps.

4. Linkages to Women's Health and Poverty Issues

WKWA's next Multi-Year Proposal to Status of Women Canada

- WKWA is in the driver's seat here.

5. Project Evaluation and Reporting

- The Equity Coordinator will facilitate a project evaluation by the Advisory Committee and WKWA. Final report to Status of Women Canada will be submitted by March 31. This includes the final budget and list of expenditures.

6. Handing over Files

- WKWA will receive the written files and most resource materials. Some may be handed to Selkirk College or Greater Trail Community Skills Centre where appropriate.