

**Transcript for Women in Trades: Breaking the Bias
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TIM CARSON:

Well, welcome, everyone, to this Women in Trades Breaking the Biased Panel Discussion Webinar. It is our honor to host this session. My name is Tim Carson and I am the Provincial Trades Rep for BCcampus. I am a red seal endorsed plumber as well a gas, certified gas fitter. And I have been in the trade out in the field for about ten years. And then I taught my trade at British Columbia Institute of Technology for about 12 years, where the last couple I was the program head of the department there, and I am coming to you today from the Unceded territories, unceded lands of the Katzie and Kwantlen people, where I am thankful to live, work, learn and raise my family. And through my work here at BCcampus, I am learning to incorporate Indigenous learning into what we do, as well as providing opportunities for advocacy and change, not just in the indigenization of trades, but also in advocating for topics as important as this. And so, it is my honor and pleasure to facilitate this space for us all today.

Allow me to take a few minutes to introduce to you our panel guests. But before I do that, we do have a code of conduct, and we'll place that in the link in the chat for you for your reference. And I will mention to you that at the end of this session, we'll take about 25, 30 minutes for the panel discussion. And then after that, we will open it up for questions and answers. So, if you have any questions that come up, feel free to put them into the chat and I will get to them in order. And that would be great to see you there. So, let me introduce to you our panel today. We have Miranda, and Miranda is a fourth class power engineer and a fourth year steam fitter with UA170. And she is the director of Build Together and she is also the regional rep for BC WITT. We also have Lauren with us today who is a journey person, construction electrician, living and working in BC, who is also a member of the BC WITT Governance Committee, amongst other things that she's involved in. And I'm sure you'll hear about that.

And finally, we have Hilary Peach, Hilary Peach is a welding inspector and a boiler safety officer. And she has traveled as a pressure welder in the Boilermakers Union across the continent and working in multiple disciplines within her trade in the BC shipyards and pulp mills, and even into the Alberta tar sands and as Far East as the Ontario Steel Belt. And she has an upcoming memoir that we would like to mention to you called Thick Skin: Field Notes from a Sister in the Brotherhood. Looking forward to that coming out. So, without further ado, here is our panel. Thank you, panelists, for being with us today. It is an honor to have you.

MIRANDA-LEE:

Thank you so, much, Tim. It's an honor to be here.

TIM CARSON:

Good. So, our topic today is confirming, sorry, it's called Breaking the Bias. And when the three of us sat down to talk about this session, it was really great for me to hear from you that you didn't wanna just talk about breaking one particular bias, but a whole bunch. And so, it is my hope that we'll get through a number of if not all of these today. But I'm wondering if you could, Miranda, we'll start with you. If you could talk to us a little bit about the value of having women on the job site.

MIRANDA-LEE:

So, literally all across the province in all sites, industrial, commercial, residential, women have been showing up. They have been excelling, they've been exceeding that their trades have been present, they have been visible, and they have been a strong force to reckon with. I think it's very common for many women in the trades to hear that they often outwork their counterparts, they outwork their co-workers, that they are present and they offer a different societal upbringing, a better the softer, more refined upbringing to the traits that kind of refines the workforce. So, oftentimes you'll see them excelling not only at the trade level, but also at the administrative level, which is important when it comes to like, safety documents and functions. But also, it's kind of a shame that they're pushed into those roles often. And I think the important thing right now in trades is that women don't have to always excel. We need to start pushing towards allowing women to shop and not have to do 200% to look present as their counterparts.

But the value is there. The workers are there. The women have been breaking down these doors showing up and exceeding on sites. Yeah.

TIM CARSON:

That's great. Yeah. Hilary, you've been in the trade for a while. I'm wondering if you would have something to add to the conversation with the value of women on the job site?

HILARY PEACH:

Yeah. Miranda I think that was a really good way to start things off. I'm glad that you came out, came in from that perspective just about sort of added value. It's true that I think we're scrutinized a lot more than a guy would be coming into the trades, because if you're just, if you're one of like, you know, what's an apprenticeship class 12 or 14 people if you're, they're all I used to joke that I could never tell the apprentices apart you know, like they're just these kind of guys especially as they got older they all sort of, you know, it's just a bunch of young guys. But, you know, you stand out. The fact is, you stand out and you're scrutinized and you're assessed. And it's often been said that if like, if a guy makes a mistake, then the response is like, you made a mistake. If he make a mistake twice, then it's like, I can't believe you made that mistake twice. But if a woman makes a mistake once, it's like women shouldn't be here, they're terrible, they don't belong in the job. You know, that's the first bias that I'm gonna introduce to the conversation, because I think there's a lot there's a whole bunch of them as we said before.

I'll be there for now.

TIM CARSON:

Good. Thank you, Hilary, Lauren, I'm wondering about your perspective of the value of women on the job site.

LAUREN BOWLES:

Looking at the value of having women on site is the reality is we have a major skills trade shortage of workers and that only 5% of the population is currently women in trades and that we have 50% that we need to access and bring in. And there's gonna be tens of thousands of workers retiring in the next five, ten years or so. And we need infrastructure built. We need to maintain what we already have. And these are jobs that should be accessible to all people.

TIM CARSON:

Thank you. So, what about the bias or the issue of remuneration, Lauren I'll start with you. We talked about the remuneration and the difference between male and female workers. Could you talk a little bit, talk to us a little bit about that?

LAUREN BOWLES:

Could someone go first?

TIM CARSON:

Go ahead. Anybody.

MIRANDA-LEE:

From myself being in UA170 for my apprenticeship, my skilled trades like I've always been unionized and that environment has remuneration pretty equal across the different levels of schooling. So, once you get your terms, you're making that wage. But prior to being in the hall, I had worked at a job where I was actually often training counterparts. I was training co workers, but I was never allowed to apply for the role they were doing. I was actually a step below them and I never understood why I wasn't able to apply. I was always told, you need the 5 to 10 years experience. And it's like, but I was the person that was the go to for any issues that my co-workers that I was training had. I was the person training everybody that came on site. So, there's definitely been issues where that I have experience personally and my perspective could be differing from others. I know where I was doing the workload, I was capable, I was competent. I was also the figurehead for that position and I was not being compensated at the same rate as my counterparts.

HILARY PEACH:

We, hear that all the time around the two stories of women who have had two or three or four years experience and they find out that there's an apprentice being hired in at a greater rate of pay than that person with three years experience is getting. And I was also in a union for the duration of my career. And I will say that that's something that the union really prided itself on was to equal pay for equal work. So, that's a big advantage there. But it's also, that's an invisible it's an invisible bias in a way too, because people don't talk very much about what they make right?

MIRANDA-LEE:

No, and in many workforces, you're not allowed to or it's frowned upon. It's kind of.

LAUREN BOWLES:

Going into the trades. I always knew I wanted to be in a union. I'm a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 213. They've done an excellent job in ensuring we have a wage structure. So, every six months of experience you get a 5% raise where you work up to a journey rate and that's over a five year period. So, I'm very thankful that I had someone do that work for me through the bargaining process. I do see quite often there's a Facebook group, it's called the BC Woman in Trades. If you're in trades, you're welcome to join. There's about 2000 women in British Columbia and almost, you know, every week you see a post of, hey, I'm working at this company right now, and I saw a job posting and they're advertising for \$6 more than what I'm making. And so, I don't know if that's a gender thing, that they're getting paid less because they're seen like less worthy or of a higher rate. Or if it's people are just going forward and bargaining for themselves in fear of retaliation or whatever it may be.

But from the union perspective, it's nice that I had someone doing that for me, whereas when you're usually non-union, you're gonna have to go through that process on your own.

HILARY PEACH:

Do see that conversation come up quite a bit where somebody recently somebody said, they just hired someone in as a right off the street at \$6 more than I'm making. And then the advice in that street was, well you should apply for your own job. Yeah.

MIRANDA-LEE:

And that's a bit about the confidence aspect too, where like with new women entering the trades, I often say you just have to have that confidence, that confidence that every mediocre [LAUGHTER] counterpart comes into the job with. And I've had girls reach out to me in same kind of conversation local companies in town where they're making less than their counterparts. And you just need to encourage that self-promotion. That I think is kind of frowned upon in our younger years to be well, as we're being raised as women, as young girls, we're supposed to kind of not take up too much space. And now it's time to take up that space to self-promote.

HILARY PEACH:

Here's a quick question, for Miranda and Lauren, do you think that there's an expectation that women entering the trade should settle for less, than the accepted rate?

LAUREN BOWLES:

No. Never.

HILARY PEACH:

I mean not among us, from colleagues, I've had it expressed that, you know, that maybe they maybe, you know, maybe we should take a little bit less. And, you know, I realize my position on that is probably pretty clear. But I wonder if that's one of the assumptions going in. Right, that and that has to do with value.

MIRANDA-LEE:

I think maybe that might come too from the idea that maybe many male, men coming into the trades have had that informal apprenticeship period of their life, which if there is that unconscious bias coming, whether they are putting women at a lower rate, is it because there is that lack of informal and the assumed it should be the assumed--an assumption-- informal yeah. Of informal trades experience in their growing years. What I mean is they're not in workshops with their fathers or their mothers is often and that's just an ideal that is brought into society that we believe that a lot of, it is that where it's coming from. I'm not certain, but I haven't witnessed that personally, where I feel like there's a conscious. A lot lesser wage offered for same work. But again, I've been in a unionized environment for a long time so, I've been very fortunate.

LAUREN BOWLES:

Yeah, I think same work equal pay. When you're going into it, it's more individual skills based. But I've never worked on union as well so, this is the first time kind of reflecting on that. Yeah.

TIM CARSON:

Yeah. That's a good question that you bring up, Hillary, as to the assumptions that people have of women coming into the trades and thinking that well, OK. They don't have the certain background that

quote unquote men will have so, it would be OK. To offer them less. I'm wondering what the reason is behind some of those assumptions. Like, is it really as horrendous a bias as well, you can't do the same work so, why would you get the same pay?

HILARY PEACH:

I think that's partly it. But also there's, I think there's a much broader there are much broader biases in our culture to do with gendered work. And women traditionally are in slotted into caregiving roles which pay less and and retail roles and hospitality roles. I mean, the kinds of work that is considered female based in a gendered spectrum say, generally is paid much less so. So, I mean, one of the questions I got starting out and for a long time in my career is, is what are you doing here? Why would you wanna do a man's job? And I don't know how many times I had to explain that roles like work roles are not actually gendered. There are no men's jobs and there are no women jobs. There are just jobs. And there are people who can do them. Right. But that's not where everybody's coming from. So, and, you know, it's all the stereotypes. It's like for everything from nursing to heavy duty mechanics. You know, we will sort of we will assign male female to these things. And basically, women's so-called women's work is generally paid a lot less.

So, when we go into the trades, it's kind of assumed that as women, I think it's there's an assumption in there somewhere that as women, we are willing to take a little bit to take less. So, but anyway, that's.

TIM CARSON:

No, it's all good, that's all good.

MIRANDA-LEE:

Absolutely, it is a beautiful point.

TIM CARSON:

Yeah. And it kind of leads into some of the other biases that we talked about. And they may be hidden or they may be not so, hidden but we did talk a little bit about the biases of roles and responsibilities or even the bias of family and relatives as you come into the trade. Would you mind talking a little bit about those?

MIRANDA-LEE:

For me growing up, I actually grew up in a log yard. My parents had a log brokerage and a log yard. And my, while my mom was actually one of the first female draft women's with highways government and even though that at the time was very forward for a woman to be in that role, it was still more of an office related occupation. And in our log yard, my brother was allowed to go play with the equipment, go stamp the blocks, but I was allowed to shred paper.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

And growing up in [...] high school, I really wanted to play lacrosse and physical sports with my friends and my father shied away from that. He told me I wasn't really allowed to play those sports that are male-dominated sports. And I think that's almost why I have struck back so hard (LAUGHS). And joining the trades is probably a little bit more of that rebellious nature to prove that there isn't a gender role for these sports, for these occupations. We are able to do what we put our mind to and it's about attitude, it's about work ethic, it's about showing up, it's about the skill set you learn. It's about being able to be teachable. It's not about, can you do the job? You can do the job. There's equipment out there to help

you do the job if you physically can't do the job. Most of the work is completely within your grasp. It's just about having that work ethic, that tenacity, that want to show up and that want to prove. And hopefully one day it's going to just be just you get to show up.

Nobody asks you the question and nobody questions why you are there. So I don't know. I kind of went off-topic there, but I think my family was a big portion of and it was a rebellious response, not a natural one. A lot of women in the trades I find are daughters or family are related or they were encouraged into it by their family because their family have a history in the trades whereas I feel like I had to break that mould a bit.

SPEAKER:

Mm-hmm.

HILARY PEACH:

Because you grew up in a log yard.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

(LAUGHS)

HILARY PEACH:

I'm so jealous that you grew up in a log yard. I was raised by accountants.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

(CROSSTALK) once and ripped the running boards off of it (LAUGHS). In the log yard, oh, my gosh! Not like in town. I should really say. That was my like one moment in the log yard.

HILARY PEACH:

There you go. There you are.

LAUREN BOWLES:

I didn't hear about the trades till I was about 24, and that came from my partner at the time, who was a sheet metal worker and he saw what I was doing for work and what I was doing for school. I was more leaning towards business and arts because that's sort of more my natural talent. So my family kind of supported me in that route, which is funny because my mom is a painter. She's had her own business for 30 years on the Sunshine Coast and my dad's a carpenter. And I wonder if they never kind of advertised it to me knowing that it is sort of a burnout culture workplace and maybe they didn't want me to be a part of that lifestyle. But being in it, you know, has its pros and cons, but primarily my partner at the time was like, you know, we live in Vancouver, it's not very affordable. Trades will provide you with a steady schedule and you'll get over time. You can get a little ahead. You have a wage structure with a union, etc. So then I looked at it, OK, maybe I'll try it out, but my family never even brought it up, even though it was right in front of me.

Yeah.

HILARY PEACH:

Yeah, I was. I was supposed to marry a dentist. That was the plan. That was a family plan for me. I was supposed to marry a dentist and have three perfect kids, and I always felt like I didn't do very well because I never managed that. And then I realized there wasn't actually a lineup of dentists at my door like saying, hi, I'm the dentist, I'm here for you. So I didn't start trades until I was about 28 and I was

producing outside art events. I was doing performance art festivals and poetry performance events, producing people from all over the place. Like really interesting stuff, but you're not going to make a living and you're not going to be able to buy a house doing that and I really wanted to buy a house, so I needed a parallel career that would sort of slide me so that you could do both. And that's another thing that trades does, right? It allows you to do the things that you want to do with your life. Yeah.

SPEAKER:

So I wonder if the three of you could talk a little bit about how organizations that you're associated with are working towards breaking this bias, because it seems to be a common bias that, you know, the trades is not a place for women. And even some of those harder trades like welding heavy duty mechanic, I would even throw an electrician steamfitter. I mean, I come from a piping background, so I get all that. And it's interesting that I've interviewed a number of women in the trades and they've all said the same thing. So I never really thought about it, wasn't really put in front of me as an option. I got into the trade late. Very few, I can only remember one actually that I talked to that started in the trades when she was 19. So I'm wondering you belong to some really great organizations. What are your organizations doing to help break the bias of what we're just talking about?

LAUREN BOWLES:

I will start. So the reason I chose construction electrician was because when I first it was I want to be in a trade. So I took the list of them and I kind of audited all the different websites and organizations that were taking on apprentices and I saw through the IBEW website that we had a women's committee and seeing that, knowing that they were supportive of women and that there was going to be a support network if I needed it, that was very valuable to me. So I went that route with electrical and I didn't find that in many other trades. Since being involved with the Women's Committee, I'm currently the co-chair there, but being a part of the Women's Committee it expanded into being a part of BC Tradeswomen's Society, which is a non-profit organization supporting women, non-binary, trans and two-spirited people within the trades. And that's both a support and education group and also they lobby government to increase programs. They were one of the founding partners for the BC Centre of Women in Trades as well.

So, just having those kinds of spaces and committees or networks that you can get involved with the community and you can advocate for people like yourself and meet people like yourself, those are all very important.

SPEAKER:

Hmm. That's great. Thank you.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Yeah. I think it's important to have those spaces to unpack and realize that though your experiences are all going to be unique and different and we all have different challenges that we face. But to unpack and talk to people who have been through something potentially similar, or even just to hear about people who are experiencing worse harassment or issues at work that can be worked on, and to kind of bring those ideas together and hear what's working in some workplaces, hear what's worked even just as a response for an individual when they're met with those experiences can really be therapeutic and to have that outreach and that ability to call on different women who have worked in different areas of BC and be like, OK, this is the day I'm having and I really just need someone to cry on that's not just my

bathub and my dog for once. And I hadn't that until I joined the BC Regional Rep Program and build together where you have these like-minded individuals that are there to listen, who have experienced it.

And seen with built together we lobby for government for changes. We've worked on different programs like Period Promise program to try and bring menstrual equity to BC, to the workforce as well as to just different areas of BC whether it be school systems, etc. And then just the outreach to different projects, groups and communities. So like Girl Guides. We actually did a talk in an old age home recently which is kind of interesting or a care home I guess would be the more appropriate. But it's both nice to get out and tell your story and to hear the story of others and to be able to take those to a bigger audience as well. And I think that I've been very privileged. To have the confidence to come and speak is because of the privilege I've had in the workforce here.

LAUREN BOWLES:

And it's not always bad. It's not like, oh, I had a bad day. It's also talking like I need a pair of pants and I don't know where to buy them or like I need this like where can I find this? Yeah.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

What we found works. Yes, absolutely.

HILARY PEACH:

Go back for a second, Miranda. Something you mentioned about formulating a response or maybe Lauren it was you. I think that's a really important thing that when something is happening on the worksite to a woman or a person of colour or a person. If there's a person who's experiencing some kind of harassment or discrimination that is completely inappropriate to the workplace, if that person has to go through that journey, that episode in complete silence, just kind of endure. that's a tough nut, you know. But if that person has a community and there's a conversation around what kind of response works and what doesn't work and what's appropriate, what isn't appropriate, it's really important for that individual. It's also important for the people at the workplace that are forming that culture because they know that there is a response, that there are groups of people who are going to respond if anything happens. Huge, you know, things are not in a vacuum anymore.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

You can almost workshop those sound bites that you need to stop that culture.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, that's a good point. So we are coming up to that point in our session today where we want to open it up for Q&A from the floor. So those of you who are attending, please feel free to add any questions or comments you may have into the chat. We'll try our best to, if you want to use your hand up function in the reactions piece, I'll try my best to get to you. And as we transition over to the open floor space, we will bring everybody into the screen and where we can see each other. You don't have to turn your cameras on if you're not comfortable doing that, but we would encourage you to do that because this is the point where we all want to join in the circle and not just listen, but have an opportunity to take part in the conversation. But as we do that, I'm wondering, Lauren, Hilary and Miranda, if you could talk a little bit about some strategies to help women prepare for work in construction-related fields. What would you say?

LAUREN BOWLES:

My biggest advice or biggest piece of advice to apprentices would be to take control of your own apprenticeship and to vocalize what you want to learn. On the topic of biases, you may be given roles that people give you because they think that you're going to be best suited for that. And you may get stuck on the same task for a long time. But if there's something that interests you and you know that that's a route you want to go in, vocalize that, and let it be known that you're here, you're willing, you're ready to learn and that you want to gain these skills. Yeah. Take control of it. Would be my biggest advice.

SPEAKER:

Good. Thank you.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

And even prior to apprenticeship, if you are in school and you know that you're starting to think about the trades as a pathway, that you're wanting to try and find that shop space where you can learn safety, where you can learn even just the name of the tools, try and find that avenue, that person that might have a little bit of experience who can teach you. Or there's also YouTube, there's Khan Academy that has reverse engineering programs that's free online. [LAUGHTER...INAUDIBLE]. But there's all these online initiatives as well that you can look at that kind of teach you what the tools are. You can take informal, like confined space educational videos and it teaches you what to expect heading into the trades. If you know the tools, you're a little bit more hands-on when you show up and then you can self-promote on these sites when you show up for your apprenticeship.

SPEAKER:

Right. Thank you. Thanks. Hilary?

HILARY PEACH:

I would say set goals. Think about things that you want to work towards. Think about, you know, the old plan where you want to be a year or five years down the road. When I was starting, one of the things that I used to do is whenever I didn't have a job because I worked off a dispatch board, whenever I didn't have a welding job, I would go back to school and take another ticket. I was constantly training and constantly going back into the welding booth, practising, practising, practising, getting better, learning more, taking another ticket, adding that to my list of things that I can bring to an employer when I was looking for work. So yeah.

SPEAKER:

That's great. Thank you. So some of you who have registered for this session provided some questions and provided a few comments about what you'd like us to talk about or you'd like to walk away from this session with. And so we thought we would include those as some introduction talking points to our last half of the session. And so one of the ones that we wanted to bring up was the idea of someone said that they were hoping to learn about ways to improve instructional design of courses to better suit the trades education for all genders. And I'm wondering, Lauren, Hilary and Miranda, if you could talk a little bit about your experience in trade school and what might have helped you in your experience there?

HILARY PEACH:

We're all deep in thought. Oh, wow yeah!

LAUREN BOWLES:

I have one that's quite basic is just the language change of being more inclusive. There's been countless times where I am the only woman in the room and the person will address us hey, guys and Lauren or hey, guys and lady. And it's just direct attention on me and it doesn't feel very welcoming. And I know that their honest intention is just to include me, but saying something like hey, everyone, or hey, folks, that would have made a difference because once it's like, hey, Lauren, it's just like anxiety now feels like all the focus is on you. And that takes away from whatever it is you're learning about. That's me personally, though. Hmm.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Yeah, I think...

HILARY PEACH:

Go ahead, Miranda.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Just thought to be singled out, I think in the course load when you are the only female there. I think that's a typical reaction to the different one in the room it's the kind of point them out and to notice if any conversation is being Segway, it may be in a poor direction where it frowns upon things like I know they say journeyperson instead of journeyman, things like that and then when people get upset about different nomenclature being utilized and just why can't you just accept it? Well, you're not going to go around telling everyone you're a journeywoman. No. So, like, I'm happy with what you want to be called, but if this is what I want to be called when I'm completed or just to help keep that conversation as not confrontational.

HILARY PEACH:

So when I started welding, I don't want to sound negative, so don't take this in a negative way because it did have a happy ending in the end. I got a house. When I started welding in 1996...

SPEAKER:

We did some classroom theory stuff for two weeks, and I was the only gal. And then we went out into the floor to the welding booths at the college. That first day, we went for coffee. When I came back after coffee, somebody had taken a soapstone and drawn pornographic pictures all over the inside of my welding booth. And they did that every day of my training for nine months. They did pictures of naked ladies inside my welding booth every day. And there was no strategy at the time, so you just kind of sucked it up. So, I mean, the good part is that you learn how to suck it up. You learn how to just be that person who endures. If you're asking what would help, I would say to establish a code of conduct right off the bat for the instructors or the teaching, the staff, everybody in a position of leadership to behave according to that code of conduct, to not behave in contradiction to it. And when something is happening to somebody, to act on it immediately and decisively. It's up to the leaders in the room to make space for everybody.

Yeah, the BC Centre for Women in the Trades has a wonderful program, it's called Be More Than a Bystander. I'm unsure on that length of time, it takes a few days, I believe. But basically, it addresses allyship for men, how to be better allies in trades, and how to deal with bullying, harassment, how to identify it. And so, those programs are already in place where you can go and you can learn exactly what it is, statistics, everything. Like my answer is just a personal base. But yeah, Be More Than a Bystander is

a great resource it's with BC Centre for Women in the Trades. And it's also in association with the Ending Violence Against Women, BC as well. That's a fantastic program, too. It's great. And there's a lot of people that want to say something and don't know how, so that's kind of what that tells you guys. And it is a train the trainer program, so you can take it and then bring it back to your organization and pass it, pass it on as well, which is the amazing thing about it.

It's a bit of a pay it forward. Also in regards to just education, seeing it is kind of makes you feel like you can be it, including more modern looks of society into your educational programs so that you can see different minority members also entwined with what's typical for that course load to receive, see those people in the materials that are presented. So, I remember like a lot of my second and third year, a lot of the programming was from like the '80s, '90s (LAUGHS). And so, it was a very specific person constantly teaching on the video coursework that you would receive, if you could have updated supplementary teaching with the video and the photos, or even just bringing in different counterparts to teach or to present in your classes, I think is a great way to show that - if you see someone that you feel you can relate to doing the work, you feel like you can do the work completely. Yeah. Do have one more thought on this. What gets talked about a lot is that women kind of take on the counselor role, and that can be either on the work site or in school as well.

So, if you see students starting to sort of rely on the woman in the classroom for a lot of support. Like they're there to be a student and to get educated and taking on that extra, other emotions can get super overwhelming. It's happened to myself on job sites, not so much in school, but I've heard of it before. So, just check in on them and make sure that they're able to stay focused on their studies, and they're not taking on too much in the classroom as well, as a counselor, basically. Yeah, those are really good points. Thank you. Those of you who are watching, if you see me with my head down, I'm I'm taking notes, and I am paying attention. So, I feel the need to say that out loud for some reason. So, there was a couple comments about mentorship for Women in the Trades. And just wondering if you could share any information or experiences on being a mentor for Women in the Trades, that would be great. I think one of the persons was specifically saying that they were looking to become more involved in support and mentorship for Women in the Trades.

And I'm wondering if you would have some points of interest or some advice to offer. There's the different, (CLEARS THROAT) sorry, excuse me. The different programs we've discussed, like BCCWITT built together BC Tradeswomen Society, most of the halls also have a women's program that you can get involved with or a youth and diversity and culture group often exist if you're within any of the unionized BC building trades. And then there's just that informal mentorship that I think I've found myself part of often, which is on Facebook groups or community groups you can have there's different group meetups in different areas. I know a wonderful woman on this page has one in Prince George (LAUGHS). I see her waving. And those kinds of places are a great way to find where the need is or to have your needs met. If you're needing mentorship, needing a mentor [...] groups. Thank you. Yes. Yeah, I think you've said it there, it's just getting involved with those support and networking groups.

It's so great to see such an increase over the past five years, and then also having support from the government as well, really, and the ITTA just pushing forward a lot of women in trades initiatives. There are different, what are they called, conferences as well. So, we have the BC Builds, was that what it was called for BC Centre for Women in the Trades. There's the North America Building Trades Union, they do the build together. And those are actual weekend-long events where you're solely just with trades

women, and you're with them 24 hours a day for a few days. And it's just the most amazing feeling in the room to just know that you're being heard and connecting and listening and sharing. But yeah, those local groups, the Facebook group being the beginner step. And people are always posting different meetups across the province. They're online, they're in-person and getting involved with the regional rep program, with the BCCWITT. Yeah, there's endless now. It's great. Almost every day of the week, you could find something really, yeah.

And that regional rep program's incredible. I recently took it. And it also offers training after the fact. So, you could like there's... I just took a media relevant in public relations program last week. Its developing skill sets within the women that are taking these programs as well, so that they can lead and mentor efficiently and effectively and have the network to know who to contact with different challenges that come up. Oh, and if you're a union, you can take shop steward course, and you can become a shop steward and a mentor that way as well. I gotta take a step backwards here, 'cause you guys reminded me of something where we are talking about leadership positions, women in leadership positions. And Tim, you were asking what to do in training situations or training institutions to make them more friendly. I'm paraphrasing now. But one of the things is have more female trainers, hire women teachers. There is more, I see one out there. Pardon? I see a lot of heads nodding in the gallery, yeah.

Well, in the gallery, I see somebody who's been teaching for about as long as I've been welding. So, hi. (LAUGHTER). (CROSSTALK) right on. That makes a huge difference, a huge difference. Just saying. It was my female teacher at the hall. I had quit after my first year and she checked in on me constantly. I was like, come back. And then she was actually the one who got me connected with Bill together and on this journey. So, it makes a huge difference to have that. The women in boilermaker always said [...] was harder on them than she was on the men. And I said, "Yeah, because you have to be better." (LAUGHTER). Oh, that's good. That's good. So, there's a comment in the chat from Danielle. It's bizarre that there can be so much poor treatment of women students and then those students come to the women for emotional support. Yeah, that is bizarre. And so, thank you for putting that in the chat, Danielle. Feel free everyone in the gallery that if you have a question or a comment that you would like to add to the conversation, feel free to just unmic yourself and join the conversation, or if you know how to use the hand-up function 'cause you don't wanna barge right in, please feel free, whatever's most comfortable for you.

OK, or if you wanna go ahead and put something in the chat, that would be great. There's a point in here for a career advisor for trades. And I'm wondering if I had my daughters here and they were listening to this panel and even this group, what would you recommend to them as they consider a life in the trades? I know that you've talked a little bit about a plethora of things, but if you were to offer a couple pieces of advice or something that you've learned, what would you say to them? I have three daughters by the way. And none of them are in the trades, which is kind of sad for me, but well, that's for another discussion. But what would you say to them if they were sitting here and they were considering a life in the trades? I'd say, learn how to regulate your nervous system. (LAUGHTER). Know that you are gonna be put into survival mode quite a bit. You're gonna be working overtime. You might not be seeing your family and friends as much as you'd like to. You might not feel appreciated all the time, and that all comes with its own mental health struggles.

So, just learning, you know, eating well, proper caffeine intake, just sleeping, making time for your hobbies, saying no when you're burnt out would be the biggest thing. Because I pushed myself so hard

for the first two, three years, and now I'm all worked up and I'm really just learning how to wind back down, so I can go back out and be the best worker I can be and be able to learn and not have all that clouded stuff going on and emotions and feelings. So, that was a big one for myself. Yeah, thank you. That's huge. Lauren, that's great insight. I would say, you better love it. You better be something about it that you love other than the money, which, you know, it's... First of all, it's not wrong to wanna make some money. That's sort of taboo sometimes because we always, a lot of people are trained to kind of do things for the greater good or whatever, but that's not a bad motivation if you wanna make some money. But you also better love it. All the things that Lauren mentioned - the travel, the long hours, the actual work itself.

I chose welding because I didn't wanna be fixing broken things. I wanted to be making things. So, I had a little blacksmith shop, and then I would fool around, and it was a lot of fun. So, like find the part of the thing that really inspires your curiosity, I guess, would be my answer, follow your curiosity. That's the thing that will take you through whatever it is that you're having to face. Yeah, and having your Red Seal open so many doors as well. It doesn't mean you'll be on the tools forever. You can go into leadership roles. You can go to other organizations. You can become an assistant business manager. There's always ways to expand your skillset. You're never stop learning. There's just endless possibilities with trades. There's actually a program at Thompson River University where half of your credits for a Bachelor's of Technology come from your Red Seal. So, that Red Seal holds a lot of power. It really is just the beginning stepping stone. When you get into an actual trades environment, you realize that there's like logistics, there's quality control, there's planning, there's construction management.

It really is almost the gateway to a whole other world. So, it's just the start. I think it's important also to tell anyone that's thinking of joining the trades that everybody's learning. The kind of the beautiful thing about the trade world is that you're constantly learning, it's constantly changing, it's developing. So, don't be afraid to ask questions. And I actually find there's a lot more appreciation for apprentices who show up and they say, "I don't know. I need you to show me this. This might sound ignorant. This might be silly, but I've never seen this before." And that's an appreciated behavior on these sites. Whereas if you show up and you're quiet, and you just try that, that might be where you see yourself getting into a little bit more hot water. And just be confident coming in. I know that it's really easy to practice, but even just practicing small confidence boosting experiences like go order coffee and be, "I want that coffee." And learn how to really know how to ask for things and be assertive because the second that switched in my personality was when the trades got a lot easier and a lot more enjoyable for me.

So, I think that being able to recognize what you know, what you don't know, what skill sets you have, are important. And I think also knowing that - I think a lot of the concerns coming into the trades for a lot of women is the physical aspect. And there's equipment in place, like as the building blocks get bigger, the crane that are bigger, you get equipment that is bigger, you learn about mechanical advantage. There's so many ways for a job to be done, and none of them are wrong anymore. That's just not an accepted way to do the work. It's just not a safe way to do the work. There's smart ways to do it as well. So, if you are open to learning those mechanical advantages, you can do any job that you're tasked with. And I think it's really important to know that, like, as much as it sounds intimidating, you can do any of these tasks. There are ways to do it. There are engineering and administrative processes in place so that you can figure out how to get that job done safely. Super good points.

Love them all. I may come back to you, Miranda, on what was the switch for you 'cause you mentioned that there was a point that you switched. So, I may come back to that. So, I'm just giving you a little bit of warning. JB mentioned in the chat, I've heard from some employers that they find women apprentices and journeypersons to be more dedicated and competent because women do try harder. That seems like a pretty true statement and from what's coming through in this conversation and previous conversations I've had, so thank you JB for that. Kaylee, I hope I pronounced your name correctly, Kaylee. Can I speak for that a bit? I'm so sorry. Yeah, sure. Go ahead, yeah. Just 'cause I think many of us in these like in built together in BC Tradeswomen Society and BCCWITT, and I'm sorry to speak to all groups, but I think that a lot of the reason we do this is because we are striving for women to be allowed to be mediocre on site, to be allowed to be an average worker, to be able to show up and not have to always perform at 200% to look like they're present.

HILARY PEACH:

Another way to say that would be to make room for the women who are superstars but also to make room for everybody.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Everyone, Yes.

HILARY PEACH:

Right. Yeah.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Yeah. Thank you. Sorry, I may have (CROSSTALK)

HILARY PEACH:

No, no, you're right. You're right.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Yeah, I know. I want mediocrity. I'm tired (CROSSTALK).

HILARY PEACH:

You're totally right. And like in art, in my other life, which has to do with the arts. I have a friend who is a producer, who used to say, I'll always defend an artist's right to fail. And I didn't understand what that meant. But, I mean, what she meant is that that's where the real work is coming from, right? That's what's where things are. That's where it's actually...

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

That gets gritty.

HILARY PEACH:

A person's actually discovering new things, which is kind of unrelated. It's kind of related in that you shouldn't have to do 200% to be able to walk side by side with the rest of the workers and get paid the same wage.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

Yeah, and get the same promotion options and praise, and yeah.

LAUREN BOWLES:

And it takes all types of people to make a functional crew. You know, someone might be more physically strong, but someone else has keen attention to detail. So this person might be great at cable pull this person's really great up, putting up a panel. End of the day, we're gonna turn the lights on and all bodies, all minds put them together that's done. Yeah.

TIM CARSON:

Good, so Kelly mentioned in the chat. In discussion with apprentices in level training, I've heard appreciation express for the positive impact of having more women in the workplace. Yeah, for sure, right? That speaks to the mentorship and connection of either on the job side or specifically in education. I would love to see educational institutes hire more women, and that would be a fantastic pathway, Lauren, to fit with what you said before. I certainly didn't think I would be teaching my trade, when I got into the trade. I was pretty much set on just this where I need to go in this what I need to do and never thought I would. If you would've told me, you know, 15, 20 years ago that this is where I'd be, I would have laughed at you. Not you specifically, but you know. So, yeah. Great. Daniel has something else here that there seems to be an increasing culture of recognising work experience for credit in Canada. Yeah, I think so. And I think that has a lot to do with the trades in general in raising the awareness of the value of trades.

And I think this is a bias that isn't necessarily sticking to a particular gender. Because I still face it myself in education, especially where I start rubbing shoulders with people who aren't from a trades background and they find out that I do have a trades background. And they're like, oh, you're a tradesperson. They don't quite know what to do with you. And I can imagine the extra layers of complexity that come from somebody seeing someone in this group here and going, Oh, you're a tradesperson. How does that work, right? And yeah, interesting, interesting. Anybody from the gallery would you have anything to offer in regards to insights, comments, and questions? I'll even entertain a complaint. I know that opens up a big door. But comments, questions, concerns or complaints.

SYLVIA:

Can I say something?

SPEAKER:

Go ahead, Sylvia. Go ahead.

SYLVIA:

OK, Yeah, I was just I've dealt with something that I've learned is called Infantilizing of Women. Where just by pure virtue of being a woman you're assumed that you're younger than you are and that you're more junior. Especially like myself if you come from another background where you have decades of experience doing other things, but because you're new in the trades. Like, a lot of women don't discover their trades until later and they've done a wealth of other things in life. But when you come to be new in a trade, I think you have two things. One is the structure. Like we all know that structures such as apprenticeship programs or the military or something, where there's a hierarchy. Where you're not really worth anything until you hit certain levels kind of thing. And then that in combination with women being assumed that they're younger and more junior than they are. I found that quite difficult and I know others have and I have heard occasionally people talking about that. I just wonder what the speakers, if they have any sort of personal take on that or how they've dealt with that.

HILARY PEACH:

Well, I would like this one.

LAUREN BOWLES:

Yeah I have a thing as well too.

HILARY PEACH:

You're right on the money with that and first, infantilizing women in order to diminish status. I think a lot of it has to do a lot of in any kind of group structure. It doesn't matter whether it's a theatre group or a work group coming together on a shutdown or a shop or whatever it is. People are gonna wanna establish status, right? Who is at the top of the pecking order? Who's the bottom? And often they will slot the woman in at the bottom just by virtue of, Oh, you're a woman, you go down here. Then they sort of know where you are, right? And I wrote an essay about the appropriation of homoerotic language on construction sites. Because I was really fascinated by how the insult structure that was employed by men towards other men often had to do with homoerotic acts. So and I was sort of musing on this and a friend said to me, Well, it isn't just the homoeroticization, like, you know, that you insult somebody by calling them by a homophobic slur. It's also the feminization of other men.

Like it's an insult to say to a co-worker, Oh, you, you, you're acting like a woman or what or come on you woman or let's go girls or things like that, right. I had a yeah, yeah. I had a foreman who actually was paying me a great compliment when we were travel carding cause he said to 'cause we were doing there a bunch of women, two welders, and we were in Alberta. And he yelled over to the Alberta foreman, Hey, you want us to send one of our girls over there to show you how it's done? And he thought he was paying a great compliment, right? Because, like, our girls are better than you are, guys. And I'm like, OK, that's nice, Lauren. But you know, the baseline that you're starting from is that we're not. So so it's, it's a huge kind of status structure thing. But there's, there is hope here. And, and when I'll tell you, that's like just the really, really good news about this is that you get old. And now I'm 53, right? Yeah, I went on a job and there is a 22-year-old apprentice and I was the boiler inspector and he was the technician.

And, I had to explain to him that his 22 years of life on earth did not outpace or outperform my a) 53 years on Earth plus my 26 years of experience. And just to kind of watch him get his head around that dynamic was really gratifying. I really enjoyed that. Watching him struggle with that, I have to say. So...

SYLVIA:

(CROSSTALK) Yeah.

HILARY PEACH:

I know it sounds like, but as the experience level, the experience level is undeniable, right? And the confidence level as you stay in longer.

SYLVIA:

I was wondering about that second part that you said, and I was wondering if you skip and do women kind of miss out on this you know, the normal normally that height of someone's career, that middle area. So you're no longer junior and you're but you're not yet battling ageism. On the other side of the spectrum, do we miss out on that middle sweet spot in our career where we're just kicking ass and we're at the height of our career and respected for it?

HILARY PEACH:

That's where we're supposed to be in leadership positions, right? That's where they're supposed to give you a radio. And I know in my trade the women didn't get radios, they got brooms. You were just a worn-out old welder and you got to go to the tool crib. But the men all got to be foremen. So there is there are things to equalize at all stages of a person's career. That observation is not imagined you are completely correct, right. So it's just how to how to excel at every level. But it is a challenge that everyone needs to take on, I think. Yeah.

TIM CARSON:

If I could just step in.

HILARY PEACH:

Sorry.

TIM CARSON:

Lauren, that's OK. I don't wanna be rude. Lauren, you had something to say. And we are past 2:30, so just wanna let everyone know that if you have other obligations to take care of, please don't feel that you need to hang around. But the door's still open. You can hang out with us here. Lauren, you wanted to add to the conversation?

LAUREN BOWLES:

Yeah, I will. I've been in the trade from ages 24 to 29, and I've been people think I'm usually 18. So this has been something I've dealt with basically my entire apprenticeship. I've had situations where people are comparing me to their daughters or kids, and I'm like, No, I'm a grown woman. This isn't, it's always gonna come up. There was one experience on I was working at a coal terminal and the foreman at the time, he didn't even like look at me. He didn't talk to me. The task he gave me was to hold the ladder for a first-term apprentice when I was already in my fourth year and I was coming up to become a journeyperson. It didn't matter my schooling and experience, it was solely based on my gender. And there I was holding a ladder in the rain, just upset about this. And I just thought to myself, like, I know there is a place for me and I just ended up quitting that job. So like, you don't actually have to tolerate that kind of behaviour too. And there is a place for you. You just sometimes need to seek that opportunity if it's not gonna be handed to you.

Yeah.

TIM CARSON:

Thank you.

LAUREN BOWLES:

That's what I wanted to add to that infantilization.

TIM CARSON:

Thank you, Miranda.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

And to kind of carry on from you've said leave the job. I've had this discussion with my husband a lot where I actually don't like taking new positions or roles because you're constantly having to re-establish yourself. Same for me I started at 19 in construction, but I've been fitting for five-ish years and then I do

my Power Engineering before that, which is actually often a step a lot of steamfitters take after they get their red seal. And I'm actually in my almost in my mid-thirties now and everyone always thinks I'm in my young 20s when they haven't met me I'm bubbly and that doesn't help. But leaving the job for me is terrifying because I know I'm gonna have to re-establish those same contacts and that same work ethic and that same experience and that same skill set so that I'm trusted to go out and do work alone or to lead or to manage different projects or to it changes. Whereas I think for a lot of journey people or for apprentices who journey who, who actually follow that, that trade circuit for shut down the little, it's a little easier for them.

I think I've got the name now in our hall so it's easy for me now, but I it's always having to re-establish yourself, especially when you are in this, this mid-age range of looking young or seeming younger until you've hit that well-established role.

SPEAKER:

There's a place (CROSSTALK) that's the main.

TIM CARSON:

Yeah, for sure. As we come to a close, Rochelle. You wanted to say something earlier. I just wanna give you the opportunity before people start leaving in droves.

ROCHELLE:

Oh, thank you. Hi, everyone. This panel is stacked. I'm so happy to see everybody, and I'm glad I got to tune in. Just quickly, like, I'm a steamfitter pipefitter as well, as a welder. That's my trade ticket and I actually work for technical safety BC as a boiler safety officer in the Prince George area. And I just wanted to give a little shout out to the girls that are working non-union because I, I worked non-union my whole career, not really by choice, but just because of that was what the opportunities I had. And so I find that also I just wanted to bring up awareness that sometimes things that are offered through unions can be a barrier to non-union tradeswomen who don't have a union to go to. So I just want people to keep that in mind, too, that the meetup groups and the mentorship and counsellors at schools or what have you become really important to someone that's working non-union. So for me, I mean, I've been working in trade since, well, 1998 ish in the industry. And boy, I tell you, I never had anything, anyone, to go to.

And it's a pretty lonely world. So, you know, back to the question of how can we support women? I think just having access and I believe would BCCWITT and all the other organizations that Miranda had mentioned before that it's I just wish I had something like this when I was coming up. But just keep in mind, too, not everyone does have access to a union, so to speak. And just remember them when maybe offering scholarships and bursaries and opportunities that it maybe could be a barrier that they don't belong to a union. So, Yeah.

TIM CARSON:

Great, Thank you.

LAUREN BOWLES:

May I make a quick offering for people here is that if you're in a region where you don't have any meet ups but you want to get one started getting contact with BCCWITT or BC Trades Women Society and we'll help you get that started and we'll advertise it and try to get you connected with people as well.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

And get on the Facebook groups. There really was a big culture shift, like probably five years ago where these organizations started to be more available, where other women started seeking out other women for support. And I really I think that was the switch for me, just to come back to what you had said Tim where you might ask. When I became more assertive, I think it was when I quit and then came back because I was encouraged by other women in the trade and by other allies in the trade to be honest as well. I had a really great journeyman who always checked in and was like, You've got to come back, you can do this. And I think about five years ago, culture started really shifting to a more supportive environment.

TIM CARSON:

Yeah, yeah.

MIRANDA-LEE KURUCZ:

You climb environment and even just in the trades in general, I think that maybe with that bullying and harassment bill that came out. It became more of a focus then in companies to have literature speaking to bullying and harassment in the workplace. So maybe that's where the switch started, I don't know. Just a [...].

TIM CARSON:

That's good. Hillary, do you have any last words of wisdom for us?

HILARY PEACH:

No.

TIM CARSON:

OK, Perfect. Thanks, everyone, for being a part of this session. It was my honour and pleasure to not only have the panellists here but to have all of you here. And thank you so much, Rochelle and Sylvia, for speaking up and being a part of the vocal piece of what we're doing here. Thank you to all of you who contributed to the chat. If you wanna save what's in the chat, you can do that. The three buttons at the bottom and click that and click Save Chat and you'll be able to do that. If you didn't already know. We will be having more of these in the future. So keep your eyes peeled on the BCcampus website or through some of these organizations like BCCWITT and Trades Women's Society. We'll be having more of these because the more we, the more we support, the more we advocate, I think the more change we can facilitate. And I know that I am thankful for all of you who are doing such hard work promoting not just trades, but women and trades and really lifting all trades and making it a better place for all of us to be in.

And the world needs that. So thank you so much for being here. Appreciate it. And have a great day. A great week.