

Women In Trades conference set for October

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KELOWNA - It's time for Women In Trades

Nancy Darling of the Trades and Apprenticeship department at Okanagan College believes that. In addition to being Program Administrator for the regional Women's Trades Training Initiative at Okanagan College, she is working with a committee of dedicated women to coordinate a Women In Trades conference, slated for October 16-17 at the institution's Kelowna campus.

"Everyone interested in trades training is invited to come and celebrate all of the women in trades," says Darling, adding they're expecting in the neighborhood of 150 people.

"Women can see that trades jobs are good paying jobs and they want those jobs for the same reasons men do - so that they can live in the Okanagan

and support their families."

Lindy Monahan, an Occupational Safety Officer for WorkSafeBC who has been working in trades for 30 years, shared the idea of holding a conference with Darling and Pat Dandeneau earlier this year. Together, they've formed a committee and crafted a dynamic and interactive program that includes speakers and workshops including a variety of key areas for personal development and other opportunities.

Workshop topics include: how to build a resume and a network of support, tool maintenance and repair, fitness - injury prevention and using levers, workplace conduct and how to avoid violence in the workplace, and more.

"Unlike typical conferences, there are even fitness options on the Agenda designed to get

people moving and to make sure attendees are focused and attentive in the seminars!" says Darling

"I hope the conference allows the women to come together and form new friendships ending the isolation that can occur out in the field," says Monahan. "We want to fan the flames of mentorship and help set up a data base where mentees and mentors can get connected. Lastly, I wanted them to see what success looks like, where the trades can take you. And what a fun and challenging ride it can be."

Monahan says she hopes the gathering fosters "safe work practices of the women out on sites by offering them some tools that will help them out there at their various workplaces. Sometimes you can get bullied into doing unsafe acts on

work sites and we want to help them with their negotiating skills so they can recognize the problems they may encounter and be able to present another option to solve the problem."

"Safe work also comes with being able to do the job. Trades positions are often physically demanding and in order to avoid injuries one must maintain a level of fitness, hence the workshop on fitness and levers."

To that end, WorksafeBC will do a presentation on rights and responsibilities so the women will know their rights and what the employers obligations are. The work shop will help them understand better their role in safety at the job site.

Pat Dandeneau, Manager of Apprenticeship Programs at Okanagan College, says that since 2004 they have had

over 350 female apprentices take their trades training at Okanagan College, in all sectors: 65 Carpenters, 69 Electricians, 12 Plumbers, 3 Heavy Duty Mechanics, 14 Automotive Service Techs, and more.

"Over the last few years we have seen a significant increase in women entering the trades," says Dandeneau.

"Just 10 years ago women represented one per cent of the apprentice students in trades, now the women represent about 25%. "Our local employers are very keen to hire and apprentice women."

For more information on the Women in Trades program or the 2009 Conference, visit <http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/wtti> or call 1-877-755-2266 and ask for the Trades Office.

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Women in Trades Conference

October 16 and 17
Kelowna Campus

Online registration
available

Call Maura Lucente for more
information 250-575-6194

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