

FIVE SYSTEMIC STRATEGIES

There is no shortage of advice and examples of gender-inclusive policies and programs in a range of industries; these practices can help to create an environment where women and men can be strong contributors to the business and its success. What our fifteen organizations on the Gender Advisory Committee have come to realize is that attracting and keeping more women in mining will require the best of these practices – and more. Rather than a “quick fix”, we will require systemic change in our organizations – in “how we work together” in the workplace.

An effective effort to increase women’s participation in the mining industry must also be a collaborative effort – involving employers, educational systems, associations and other stakeholders. Employers have the responsibility for shaping workplaces with inclusive cultures that will fully engage women and benefit from their contribution. Educators, industry associations, women’s groups, researchers and many others all have their parts to play in encouraging women to pursue opportunities in the mining industry.

This section of the Action Plan outlines five categories of gender-inclusive practices. These are not stand-alone or mutually exclusive choices; they are complementary strategies that are most impactful when implemented together.

1 Signs and Symbols of Gender Inclusion in the Workplace Culture

An organization’s culture is often described as an iceberg – with most of it below the surface, vitally important but difficult to see directly. The aspects that can be directly observed are signs and symbols of the assumptions and perspectives that are common below the surface within that workplace culture.

When visible aspects such as terminology, images, facilities and policies appear to be designed for men, it can make it more difficult to attract women into the industry. These are not gaps in political correctness – they are subtle but powerful signals about the workforce and who is “in” and who is “out”. In a competitive labour market, talented women will gravitate to those workplaces that reach out to welcome them.

Many workplaces have policies, processes or procedures that were designed at a time before there were many women in mining. Over time, they shape a workplace. Changing these signs and symbols on their own will not be sufficient to drive culture change, but it is certainly necessary⁶. Modernizing the signs and symbols helps to set the tone for modernizing the assumptions that are the foundation to “how we work together”.

⁶ MiHR has developed a Gender Equity in Mining (GEM) Toolbox that focuses directly on the steps for updating policies and practices to identify and remove these unintended systemic barriers (available in 2017).

To encourage gender inclusion, look for the subtle features that reflect unintended barriers to women's full participation. For example, ensure your workplace, your association's events, and your training program's recruitment materials are updated with these new "signs and symbols":

- Facilities, equipment and materials that are appropriate for women and men.
- Job titles that are gender-inclusive – "team lead" instead of "foreman" – so that everyone sees that both women and men can perform the role.
- Equipment terminology and work expressions that are gender-inclusive – "staffing" instead of "manpower", or "personnel carrier" instead of "man-carrier".
- Policies and procedures that are explicit about accommodating differences among employees. For example, inclusive workplaces have promotion policies that allow for varied career paths. Inclusive travel policies will reimburse taxi fares or the use of personal vehicles in recognition that some employees might feel unsafe when taking public transit alone in certain locations.



2 Respectful Workplaces

Recent research in our industry has confirmed that we have a challenge. Many capable women are being driven away from mining by a workplace culture that has not kept up with the times. While there are pockets of progress, the pace of change is slow (MiHR, 2016a; Ozkan & Beckton, 2012; and Women in Mining Canada, 2010).

Most recently, MiHR explored women's experiences in mining as well as their satisfaction and career plans. The results showed that women still perceive mining work environments as sometimes more "macho" than modern; the industry as an "old boys' club" where women can never be full members; and day-to-day interactions as often a series of micro-inequities that gradually wear women down (MiHR, 2016a).

MiHR's research⁷ confirms that employees do see that the culture is changing – very gradually. In many mining workplaces, but not all, there is a shift occurring. As the workforce has become more diverse, behaviours have started to change and the workplace has started to become more inclusive. Taken as a whole, it is clear that there are some positive changes under way, yet the MiHR results emphasize that the change to date is insufficient.

The link to improved business results is solid – a respectful workplace will have lower turnover, less absenteeism, less time spent resolving conflicts and complaints, and better mental health.

Fostering respectful workplaces includes:

- Understanding what constitutes workplace harassment, bullying and violence.
- An explicit policy of zero tolerance for certain categories of behaviour.
- A resolution process for addressing concerns and workplace conflicts.
- Supports for developing positive working relationships such as training, reinforcement for collaboration and teamwork, and communication about inclusion.

3 Ability to Reconcile Work with Personal Commitments

“Work-life balance” was, for many years, seen as a women’s issue. There is now recognition that this is important for men as well as for women, and also for a company’s “bottom line”. Canadian society’s traditional gender roles are changing – young men are more active in caregiving, women have expectations for a fulfilling career, and members of older and younger generations want to be able to have meaningful personal lives outside of work.

Companies that are more gender-inclusive look for ways to help employees fulfill multiple roles in their lives. Implementing the formal policies and the informal practices that support balance has a direct impact on the “bottom line” – reduced absenteeism, improved employee engagement, less stress and improved health – to name just a few benefits. (See for example Lero, Richardson, & Korabik, 2009.)

⁷ Challenges of diversity and inclusion are not unique to women’s experience in the industry. The Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) has recently produced a series of four research reports on the workforce barriers and opportunities facing Aboriginal people, immigrants to Canada, and women. The report series entitled Strengthening Mining’s Talent Alloy is available at www.mihr.ca.

Supporting employees to balance their work and personal lives includes:

- A set of policies or programs to govern practices such as flex time, working from home, personal leave, extended health benefits, Employee Assistance Program, practices to stay in touch with family while at remote work sites, taking or carrying over vacation, managing overtime requirements, community childcare partnerships and others.
- Practices such as not having meetings that extend outside of core working hours and limitations on email and other business contact outside of scheduled working hours.
- Alignment of the informal and formal reward systems, including a re-definition of the “ideal employee” for advancement, that emphasizes performance over sheer number of hours spent at work.

4 Inclusive Practices for Career Opportunities

Women's careers in the mining industry exhibit many of the same challenges well known in other industries. Whether these are described as glass ceilings, leaky pipelines or other metaphors, the reality is that mining employers are losing out on valuable talent.

Many women who complete postsecondary studies in science, technology and engineering fields do not remain in their field during their careers (Glass, Sassler, Levitte, & Michelmore, 2013). Mining industry research in the UK revealed that although 30% or more of graduate recruitment was women, by the time those recruits reached mid-level management, the proportion of women had fallen to 10% (Women in Mining UK, 2015).

Having a healthy talent pool of women who can progress to more senior positions builds the supply for executive and board-level appointments – creating the potential for the sustained bottom-line business benefits described above. Inclusive career practices also show more junior women that opportunities are available to them – thus reducing the loss of talented women in those critical mid-career years, and positioning the company to reap the benefits of better attraction and retention of talent.

Ensuring that career practices are gender-inclusive involves taking a close look at the organization's culture and practices. It directly tackles any remnants of an “old boys' club” by uncovering and addressing the systemic barriers. It tracks results. Being intentional about having inclusive systems for career advancement and development opportunities includes:

- Providing learning programs that build women's skills and readiness for positions where they are needed and traditionally under-represented.
- Designing career paths that take account of career events such as parental, care-giving or educational leaves.
- Formalizing and extending the benefits of networking by encouraging leaders and managers to mentor and advocate for talented women.
- Updating talent management processes, such as definitions of potential and hiring/ promotion criteria, to be gender-inclusive.
- Being proactive about hiring and promotion by requiring efforts to ensure that short lists include qualified women for consideration.
- Developing feedback and performance management processes that ensure that women (as well as men) get timely, honest and direct feedback to aid their development⁸.

Training, coaching and mentoring can also support women in developing the skills and capabilities to be able to thrive and contribute in a range of roles in mining, particularly in roles such as skilled trades, technical occupations and senior management – where they have been consistently under-represented. Skill-building programs for women can range from training a group of women to work as heavy equipment operators, to individualized support for advanced degrees or public speaking skills.



Training investments make good business sense if there is a return on the time and money used. When times are tough, there are many cost-effective approaches, including accessing training available through industry associations, women-focused agencies, MiHR, and local colleges. There are successful examples across the country. For example, the Edmonton-based organization Women Building Futures goes beyond just the hands-on work skills for construction or trades occupations – they focus on readiness-building. This includes intangible skills such as what to expect in camp life, how to adapt to shift work, and communication skills for various situations. Women in Resource Development Corporation, based in Newfoundland and Labrador, offers an Orientation to Trades program, a database of mentors, and direct support to employers wanting to increase gender diversity. Aboriginal Women in Mining helps women to prepare for the lifestyle changes required for working in mining – the program required women who were training for the Detour mine to leave home for a week, supporting them to address family issues and the personal impact of life at a remote work site.

⁸Research has shown that women are more likely to receive vague feedback, whereas men will receive specific guidance on what they are doing well and how to improve their performance. (Correll & Simard, 2016).



Goldcorp's breakthrough "Creating Choices" and "Growing Choices" initiatives combine formal training with peer and senior management networking. The programs build skills, knowledge, capabilities and personal aspirations. Women grow individually and professionally and gain the confidence to pursue new opportunities within the organization. The examples of impact are compelling: women have pursued further education, have been promoted, have applied to other positions and have taken control of their futures.

5 An Industry that is a Magnet for Talent

Sustainable progress toward a more inclusive industry will require more than the isolated efforts of individual employers. The active involvement of other industry stakeholders will create greater momentum.

Attracting young women, as well as women who are re-entering the workforce, to mining-related occupations or courses of study will help to create a larger pool of talent for the industry. Work conducted by Carleton University's Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership with the Canadian mining industry has emphasized that "one of the major challenges facing the mining industry today is that of attracting a sufficient number of women to mining-related, post-secondary education and training programs." (Ozkan & Beckton, 2012, p. 24). The researchers highlight the importance of the transition between secondary school and early career or post-secondary studies and conclude that "the industry has failed to effectively seize upon this transition period." (Ozkan & Beckton, 2012). In a recent MiHR survey of job seekers, the majority of the more than 1,500 women respondents disagreed with statements that the mining industry "employs people like me," and the mining industry "offers jobs that interest me." (reported in MiHR, 2016a, p. 26).

Individual employers have a role to play, by partnering with local schools, offering work placements, and doing community outreach. Many women currently employed in the industry cite early experiences of mining, through family connections, summer jobs or co-op programs, as being instrumental in their career choice (MiHR, 2016a, p. 27). Other stakeholders such as universities, colleges, non-profits and industry or professional associations are positioned to reach out to women and career influencers such as families, teachers, and employment counselors.

Other industry-wide efforts give an opportunity to share knowledge, use resources efficiently, and address issues from different perspectives to generate innovative solutions. Several recent gender inclusion initiatives within the mining industry demonstrate

the value of partnerships and collaborations among government, industry or professional associations, non-profits, educational institutions and employers. To list a few examples:

- Carleton University's Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership conducted a comprehensive research program, including a "Critical Conversation" that brought together senior representatives from mining companies, senior government officials, mining associations, Aboriginal organizations, unions, academia, and NGOs to share perspectives on the challenges, best practices and opportunities for change to recruit, retain and advance women in the industry (Ozkan & Beckton, 2012).
- The MiHR SHIFT project *Take Action for Diversity* involved a network of eight actively involved employers that set clear goals and action plans for increasing diversity and inclusion in their workforce. Collaborating and learning from each other and from gender experts over a period of 18 months, they were able to achieve significant progress (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2013).
- The Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum (CIM) published *Women of Impact*, which profiles eighteen women who have made significant contributions to the fields of materials, metallurgy, and mining in Canada (Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum, 2015).
- The Gender Equity in Mining (GEM) initiative (2015-2018), being led by MiHR, brings government funding support together with the active involvement of gender inclusion experts and ten mining employers. Working closely with a network of Executive Gender Champions and their Taskforce, the project will pilot employer-specific solutions to identifying and removing largely unintentional gender inclusion barriers in policies, processes and procedures (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2015).
- This National Action Plan initiative has been led by Women in Mining Canada, with the three-year involvement of a network of fifteen organizations that are committed to championing gender inclusion across Canada's mining sector. The representatives of these 13 employers and 2 stakeholders have developed into a mutually supportive community of practice, characterized by the trust levels and insights into gender inclusion that create a vibrant forum for shared learning and innovation.