



## Diversity and the Corporate Culture in the Geosciences

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### Summary

There are still very few women geoscientists, especially in decision-making roles. Many of the reasons for this are known and they continue to be explored to reach a greater understanding of their influence. These include corporate culture and gender factors. Corporations are aware that there is a very strong business case for workforce diversity in all sectors and at all levels. The Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology has developed tools to enable Corporations to take effective action to increase the diversity of their workforce.

### Introduction

Diversity is integral to business success, but gender diversity in the geosciences remains an elusive goal. We know that there are many factors which account for this. These include the culture of the workplace and the different socialization and educational experiences of women. The Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology, the WinSETT Centre, was established five years ago to further understand the barriers to entry and career advancement and satisfaction for women in the sciences, engineering, trades and technology, and to take action to change the situation. Recognising that the value of diversity in the workplace is in the asking of different questions, the move away from “group think”, and finding more robust solutions to complex problems, our goal is to have women recognize and understand influences such as unconscious biases, differences in communication styles and politics in the workplace, and thus be able to contribute from a position of awareness and strength. This benefits both the employer and the women.

### Theory and/or Method

As a result of stakeholder meetings, round table discussions, surveys, and interviews the Centre has heard the needs expressed by women geoscientists and engineers and has developed tools to advance their retention and leadership in the workplace. We began by developing a day-long workshop “Becoming Leaders: An Introduction to Leadership Skills and Strategies” which explores factors that influence the career and leadership success of women and empowers them to make career and leadership development choices. As a result of the expressed needs of the women who attended the many offerings of this workshop across the country, modules on Effective Communication for Women in SETT, Negotiating for Success, Navigating the Politics of the Workplace, and Networks, Mentors and Sponsors – What, Why, How?, have been developed and offered to very positive response from the participants.

The culture of the workplace influences the retention and promotion of women scientists and engineers. A workshop on Creating Respectful and Inclusive Workplaces has been prepared for leaders and managers in science, engineering and technology-based organizations.

### Examples

The workshops in the Becoming Leaders series are intended to enable women scientists and engineers to recognize and explore gender factors that influence their career success and progression. The

module on Creating Respectful and Inclusive Workplaces is for executives, team leaders and managers in science and engineering organizations. It examines workplace culture and the characteristics of supportive and inclusive workplaces. It emphasizes the importance of interpersonal and communication skills to a productive workplace.

## Conclusions

Canadian companies employing geoscientists and engineers are recognizing the business case for retaining and advancing their technical women. The WinSETT Centre has listened to the expressed needs of the women in these organizations and has developed effective tools to enable this to occur.

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