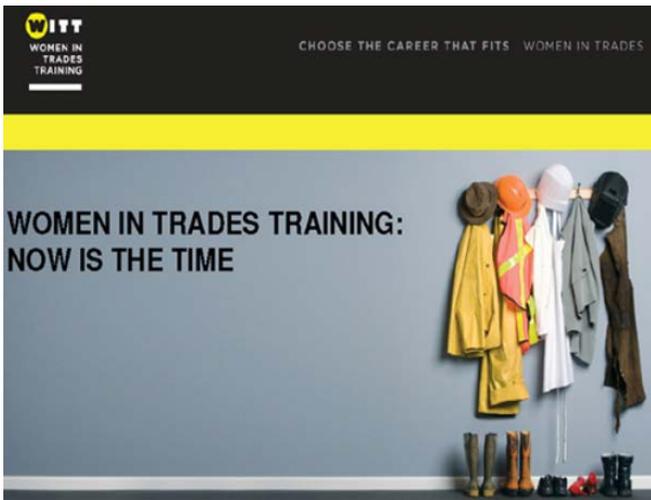


THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.



B.C. wants more women to take trades training.
Photograph courtesy of
Thompson Rivers University

Women in Trades

Adapted from *The Vancouver Sun*

Level 3

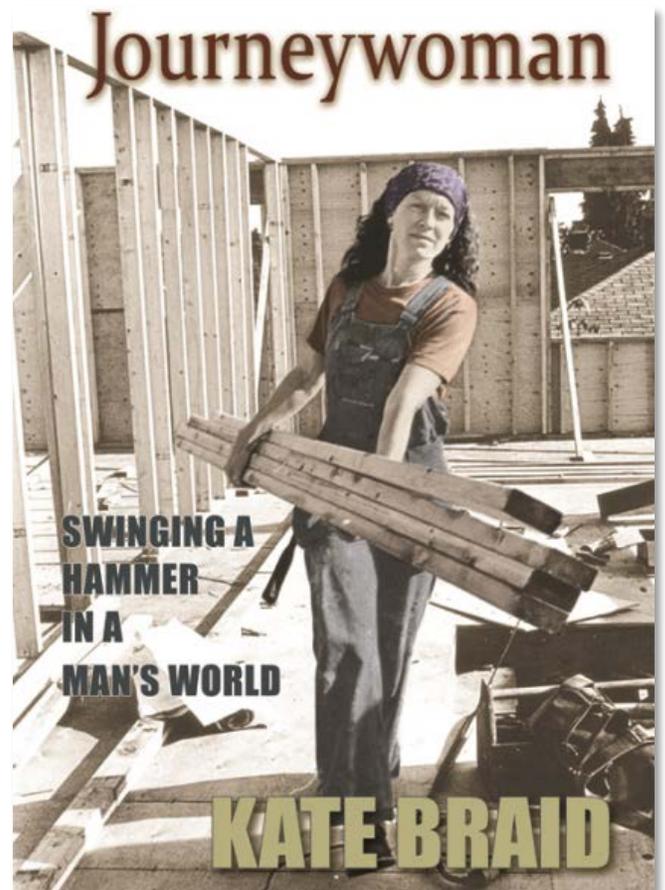
Members of B.C.'s building trades have worked on most big projects in B.C. The skills of these people have made many dams and pipelines. These projects give us power and heat our homes. The bridges and highways take us to work, and home again. We travel on them when we go on holiday. The hospitals we use, and the schools our children attend have been built by skilled workers.

The world of the trades has been a world of men.

But this world is slowly changing.

Journeywoman

Kate Braid is a woman who knows about the building trade. She wrote a book called "Journeywoman: Swinging a Hammer in a Man's World."



The front cover of Kate Braid's memoir about working in the building trades
Photograph courtesy of Kate Braid

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Braid's autobiography tells about her journey from the mid-1970s to the early 90s.

It tells about her courage to become a qualified carpenter. It was not an easy journey.

Braid's life as a journeywoman

Braid was raised in Montreal and had a university education. Moving to B.C., she found work as a labourer.

She was the only woman in a crew of men. The crew worked on a Gulf Island school project.

Braid later became an apprentice and journeywoman carpenter.

She built houses, bridges and high-rises.

A pioneer

Braid was a pioneer in many ways. She was the first woman to join the Vancouver local of the Carpenters' Union.

She was the first woman to teach construction full-time at the BC Institute of Technology.

And she was one of the first women to run her own construction company.

Braid is also a writer.

She has published five books of prize-winning poetry.

Her writing also includes subjects from Glenn Gould to Emily Carr.

The future of the trades

Soon there is going to be a serious shortage of skilled workers in B.C.

There is going to be a lot of work.

Where will B.C. find these workers?

Tom Sigurdson of the

B.C. Building Trades Union

says that more First Nations, women and new Canadians must be included in trades training.

B.C. expects to have a shortage of 160,000 skilled workers by 2015.



Kate Braid working at a friend's home
Photograph courtesy of Kate Braid



Having a mentor while learning skills
is key to successful training.
Photo by Ward Perrin, *The Vancouver Sun*

Training for women

The B.C. Institute of Technology has a Trades Discovery Program for women.

In early March, Okanagan College started the first all-female metal fabricating program.

Lindsay Langill is Dean of the School of Trades and Technology at Thompson Rivers University (TRU).

Langill says TRU is proud to have one of the strongest women in trades programs in the province.

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Of this university's over 2,000 trades and apprentices, twenty per cent each year are women. More women are joining welding, heavy equipment operator, and electrical trades. And these women are doing very well.

Be your own boss

One place where there are opportunities to be your own boss is in the trades, says Maninder Dhaliwal. Dhaliwal is an electrical engineer. She also is the executive director of a non-profit group that trains inner-city women in carpentry. She also says, "The situation of women in the trades is changing for the positive,... but it needs to change faster. It needs to change for the women, for the families and B.C. for a decent economy."

Links:

Thompson River University (TRU) in Kamloops:
http://www.tru.ca/trades/women_in_trades.html

BCIT: Trades Discovery for Women:
<http://www.bcit.ca/study/programs/1190acert>

Okanagan University in Kelowna:
<http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Page19415.aspx>