



# Mining Leaders to Inspire Action for Gender Diversity

By Elena Mayer, and Sophie Bertrand, Women Who Rock

It is now widely recognized that gender diversity can lead to greater financial success. Mining, a male-dominated industry, continues to lag behind on this issue. With the expected talent gap where the need for skilled workers is estimated to go up to 90,000 by 2017<sup>1</sup>, mining companies need to take action to attract and retain workers historically under-represented, especially women. Mining leaders need to come together to provide more women-focused initiatives, educational programs and support industry organizations.

The current representation of women in the Canadian mining industry, at 17 per cent in 2015, is well below the general work representation of 48 per cent.<sup>2</sup> What is even more alarming is that the numbers have not significantly changed since 1996, where they sat at 11 per cent.<sup>3</sup> This is a clear indication that further action must be taken.

Various studies show that increasing the percentage of women in mining can play a key role in the industry's success. More women will provide a solution for skilled worker shortages through access to a larger talent pool. And inclusion of women at all levels of an organization, including senior management, has been linked to stronger financial, governance and organizational performance.

Affecting change requires commitment, passion and resources. Proactive steps must come from those who are in a position of power. Introducing awards and scholarships; creating in-house programs; communicating best practices and supporting industry organizations are some of the ways mining leaders can contribute to increased gender diversity. A few mining companies are leading the way.

Goldcorp's gender diversity initiatives resulted in "Creating Choices"—the world's first company-wide development and mentorship program for women in mining.



Caroline Williams (underground), a Generation Gold participant, works at the Kettle River-Buckhorn property, in the State of Washington. Photo courtesy of Kinross Gold Staff.

Created in 2010, the program helped more than 1,200 women across the company. One of the program's main messages is "Dare to Dream," which resonates with many of the adventurous, tenacious and resourceful women working in mining.

Kinross, an active gold mining and exploration company headquartered in Toronto, has 11 board of directors, three of which are women. The company has shown its commitment to gender diversity and education by investing into the GenGold program. Started in 2007, the program provides recent graduates four years of both mine and corporate experience around the globe. The program graduates four students a year, of which 37 per cent are women.

Increasing education and awareness about careers in mining will attract more talent. The pool of students joining mining-related disciplines is shrinking, and the number of women remains low. A study by Women in Mining Canada and the Mining Industry Human Resources Council identifies two

reasons behind this trend: most students are unaware of career opportunities in mining, and those who are aware have a negative impression of them.

Mining Matters is an organization dedicated to bringing knowledge and awareness about Canada's geology and mineral resources. Since 1994, Mining Matters has reached more than 600,000 teachers, students and members of the public, broadening understanding of earth sciences and the vital role mining plays in everyday life.

Finally, organizations for women in mining are vital for change. The Women in Mining organization, with its various branches all over the world, has been doing an excellent job by publishing research on gender diversity and creating global networks.

The Women Who Rock (WWR) organization, founded in 2014, aspires to become an integral part of the industry's efforts to attract women to mining. Our long-term strategy is to create programs that connect various stakeholders in the industry, with the



goal of supporting and empowering women. Built on the fact that mentorship was identified as one of the most powerful ways to inspire the next generation of mining professionals, our flagship event, the annual Auction for Action, offers women an extraordinary opportunity to bid for a one-hour mentorship meeting with celebrated mining leaders.

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In conclusion, the industry needs to come together and offer women the tools and opportunities to achieve a successful career in mining. Mining leaders, educators and industry organizations are all equally responsible for fostering meaningful and positive change and bring our industry into the

21st century. What creative steps will you take, as a leader and a voice for the mining industry, to bring about this necessary gender diversity change? **M**

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*strategy in Canada and Latin America. While still a student at Schulich, she used her personal funds to found Women Who Rock, an organization which aspires to become an integral part of the sector's efforts to attract women to mining. Mayer has received various industry recognitions, chief among them, in 2015, she was named one of the 100 Global Inspirational Women in Mining.*

**References**

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