

The Canadian Mining Story

WINTER 2026

Closing the Gender Gap:

A Workforce Priority for Canada's Mining Future



The Mining Association
of Canada
L'association minière
du Canada

mining.ca

WINTER 2026

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This issue of The Mining Story features information and initiatives being led by the Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR).

MiHR is an independent, non-profit organization that leads collaboration among mining and exploration companies, organized labour, contractors, educational institutions, industry associations and Indigenous groups to identify and address the human resource and labour market challenges facing the Canadian minerals and metals sector. MiHR is funded in part by an annual contribution, and project contributions, from the Mining Association of Canada. MAC and MiHR are grateful for the continued financial support from the Government of Canada.

Canada's mining sector is in a moment of both opportunity and challenge. Demand for critical minerals continues to rise, and with it, the need for a skilled workforce. Yet one of the most

persistent issues facing the industry is the underrepresentation of women in its workforce. Despite years of discussion and a growing recognition of the business case for diversity, women remain significantly underrepresented across mining occupations. This gap limits access to talent at a time when labour shortages are becoming a defining industry issue.

MiHR's ["Equity-Deserving Groups in Canada's Mining Industry 2024"](#) report puts the challenge into stark numbers. At that time, women accounted for roughly 15 percent of the mining workforce, a figure that has been slowly increasing over a decade and yet remains well below the national average for other industries.

Labour Market Challenges

Women's participation varies considerably across roles and departments. Representation is highest in administration, human resources, finance and geology - all areas where women have traditionally had a stronger presence. But many of the trades and technical jobs that are central to mine operations, such as heavy equipment operation, mechanical repair, welding and electrical work, remain overwhelmingly male dominated.

Employment patterns reflect these divides. Women in mining are more likely to work part-time and face nearly twice the unemployment rate of men in similar roles. These trends point to structural barriers rather than a lack of interest or ability. Job sites, equipment and facilities have historically been designed with

male workers in mind. Basic elements such as personal protective equipment sizing, locker rooms and washroom facilities are often not adapted for women, which can discourage participation and affect retention.

Along with the basic necessities not being adapted, many mines operate in remote locations or rely on fly in fly out (FIFO) schedules. These work models bring unique pressures for anyone with caregiving responsibilities. With limited childcare or eldercare support in remote regions and few family friendly scheduling options, women can find themselves shut out of opportunities that require long absences from home or unpredictable shift rotations.





Cultural Barriers

Beyond structural barriers, cultural ones remain a significant factor as well. Many women working in mining report feeling isolated in male-dominated environments or describe experiences where their skills and contributions are overlooked. Visibility is one of the cultural barriers. In many mining communities, there are few female role models in operational or leadership positions. When young women do not see themselves reflected in a sector, it becomes harder for them to envision a future there.

However, there are encouraging signs; More employers and industry organizations are recognizing the need for inclusive workplaces and taking steps to support culture change. Continued attention to creating safe and respectful workplaces will help ensure that women feel welcomed and valued. Addressing these areas offers a significant opportunity for the industry to strengthen its culture and attract more women into rewarding mining careers.

MiHR's Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

To help address these barriers, MiHR has introduced several initiatives focused on creating more accessible, respectful and inclusive workplaces.

[MiHR's EDI Toolkit for Mining Companies](#) gives employers a practical roadmap for building more equitable, diverse and inclusive (EDI) workplaces. The toolkit is also directly aligned with the Mining Association of Canada's (MAC) Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) initiative. Built around the TSM

protocols, the toolkit translates those standards into clear guides and actionable steps that help organizations move from planning to implementation. It supports MAC member companies setting meaningful EDI objectives and creating a workplace culture where women and underrepresented groups can excel.



EDI TOOLKIT FOR MINING COMPANIES

Driving systemic change by helping mining organizations develop and implement corporate EDI strategies.

Explore the series of guides, tools and reports based on the Mining Association of Canada's Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Workplaces Protocol.

Access the Toolkit: bit.ly/edi-supports



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Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada

[Women and Gender Equality \(WAGE\) Canada](#) serves as the Canadian federal government's lead organization on gender equality, shaping policy across departments and providing direct funding to community driven initiatives that advance equality for women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people nationwide. WAGE is supporting MiHR with the implementation of new TSM protocols by developing practical training, tools and collaborative initiatives across the sector. By strengthening equity, safety and community engagement, the initiative aims to increase women's participation and economic security in Canada's mining industry.

Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Gender-Based Violence Workshop funded by WAGE Canada.

These workshops help participants understand the impact of their behaviour, language and actions can have in the workplace—both intentional and unintentional—while strengthening their ability to engage respectfully with others. Participants will learn how to recognize unsafe behaviours, intervene and support colleagues, foster accountability and feel better equipped to promote a safer, more respectful and psychologically healthy work environment.

Wage Subsidy participation has seen an increase in women in post-secondary education completing mining work placements. [The Gearing Up program](#), which provides employers up to \$7,000 to hire post-

secondary students for work-integrated learning (WIL), has seen women in STEM account for 70% of placements in 2025, a 4% increase over 2024.

[Gender Equity in Mining \(GEM\)](#) is an eLearning program designed for everyone, offering learners an opportunity to deepen their understanding of gender diversity and strengthen their capacity to support gender equity and inclusion in the mining workplace. GEM encourages dialogue, perspective-sharing, and practical learning. The modules are available to all participants in MiHR's wage subsidy programs, both supervisors and students or youth completing funded placements. Upon completion, participants receive certification, helping organizations integrate equity principles into everyday practices.

The It Takes Courage Campaign is part of MiHR's [Safe Workplaces for All](#) initiative. It addresses sexual harassment and violence in Canadian mining. The focus is on breaking the culture of silence and encouraging workers to speak up and report harassment. The initiative also raises awareness of barriers to reporting harassment, such as fear of retaliation, stigma and lack of information. By promoting the campaign, workplaces can create a safer and more respectful environment across the sector.



Mining Needs You National Campaign



Beyond workplace-level efforts, [MiHR's Mining Needs You](#) national youth career awareness campaign launched in 2025 supported by a coalition of partners, including the Mining Association of Canada (MAC), the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC), the World Gold Council (WGC) and the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum (CIM). Mining Needs You focuses on long-term career awareness and talent development among youth, including those from underrepresented groups. New programs have been created, and previous program have been enhanced with the vision of supporting underrepresented youth in the sector with an increased focus on gender diversity.

The "[I Chose Mining. Mining Chose Me.](#)" Scholarship Program provides direct financial support to young people exploring mining careers. For the past four years, two students have been awarded a \$2,500 scholarship with at least one of the two annual scholarships being reserved for youth from underrepresented groups, including women. This helps ensure that financial barriers do not limit access to career pathways in mining. In 2025, with the support of the Mining Needs You campaign funders, four scholarships were awarded – with two of them awarded to women in mining related education.

The [Career Ambassador Program](#) is one of the most influential elements of the Mining Needs You campaign. Volunteer post-secondary students and mining professionals visit classrooms and youth groups across the country, either in person or virtually, to deliver presentations about their educational and career journeys. Ambassadors are selected for their communication skills, experience and understanding of respectful and inclusive workplace issues. The campaign currently has 15 women ambassadors. Their personal career stories often resonate with young women who have not previously seen mining as an accessible or appealing field.

The new **Career Ambassador Webinar Series** is another element of the career ambassador program. An ambassador is featured every few months, with a presentation tied to a specific theme. The first webinar in the series took place in June 2025 in celebration of the International Day of Women in Mining. Mining engineer and career ambassador Mélanie LaRoche Boisvert presented on the topic of *"Breaking Ground: Empowering the Next Generation of Women in Mining"*. She shared her personal path into the industry, the challenges she's faced and the successes that have shaped her career. She highlighted the importance of women's voices and diversity in mining, showcasing inspirational examples from her own experience. "Some of the benefits of diversity are that companies are two times more likely to meet or exceed their financial targets. They're six times more likely to be innovative and agile. Why? Because they have different sets of viewpoints being represented, which causes debate and this means that you have new things to try and maybe this helps find the flaws in other things." Melanie went on to say: "companies are eight times more likely to achieve better business outcomes and far more likely to achieve all targets, so there are only benefits to diversity."

The second webinar in the series, *"Exploring Mining Careers – Honouring Indigenous Voices"*, took place in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in early October. Career Ambassador Dan Miron, Process Superintendent at VALE, shared

his personal path into mining, discussed the range of career opportunities in the sector, and offered guidance for those considering similar journeys. The session also emphasizes the importance of recognizing and elevating Indigenous perspectives in the industry.

The latest webinar took place November 24 as part of the Mining Needs You national virtual career fair. Titled "Golden Opportunities: Exploring Careers in Gold Mining", Alicia Pirie, a Senior Talent Acquisition Specialist at Agnico Eagle shared her path into gold mining. She discussed the variety of careers available and highlighted how gold plays a role in both industry and everyday life, while exploring the wide range of traditional and emerging career opportunities across the sector. "When I applied for my current role, I had no mining experience. What I had were transferable skills. Communication, leadership, organization, and ability to connect with people, and those strengths opened the door for me. That's the message I would like you

to carry with you throughout my presentation. Your background might be more valuable than you think." Alicia also said, "Mining is like a small city, every type of role you see in a large organization can be found in mining. Once people see the diversity of roles in mining, they often realize there is a place for every interest and skill set".

Engaging Youth Through Interactive Tools – [Mining Needs You](#) also highlights how mining contributes to strong communities and makes a positive difference, making work feel meaningful. The campaign website features quizzes, videos and job profiles to show the variety of careers available and paths available to enter the industry. An interactive quiz walks through interests, aptitudes, preferred environments and tools, helping youth see that mining offers more than stereotypical dark and dirty roles. This kind of experience can be effective for young women who may not have had mining presented as a viable or appealing career before.

CAREER AMBASSADOR WEBINAR SERIES

Breaking Ground: Empowering the Next Generation of Women in Mining

An inspiring webinar with mining professional **Mélanie LaRoche-Boisvert, P.Eng., M.Eng.**, in celebration of the International Day of Women in Mining (IDWIM).

Date: Thursday, June 26, 2025
Time: 1:00 – 2:00 pm EST

Register: bit.ly/mihr-idwim 

MINING NEEDS YOU  **MINING INDUSTRY HUMAN RESOURCES COUNCIL**
CIM ICM 

| The Future

With the sector facing labour shortages and tens of thousands of new workers projected to be needed over the next decade, improving gender diversity is economically necessary. Diverse teams drive innovation, improve safety and strengthen workplace culture. Closing the gender gap will require sustained effort across industry, government and education.

While MiHR's initiatives lay important groundwork, lasting progress will depend on broader cultural change and continued commitment from employers across the sector. Creating workplaces where women feel safe, supported and able to advance is essential to strengthening the industry's future workforce. As Canada positions itself as a global leader in critical minerals, the mining sector has a unique opportunity

to redefine itself. Prioritizing inclusiveness and closing the gender gap will not only improve workplace culture, but it will also enhance competitiveness and drive the industry to new economic heights. For more information on MiHR and any of its programming please visit mihr.ca



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