

# Vancouver Sun

## Women in mining explore the profession at brown-bag lunches

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When Barbara Caelles became a geologist almost 40 years ago she was a rare breed: a woman in a predominantly man's world. So when she met another woman geologist, she was thrilled.

"One of the problems women had [back then] was they really had no one else to talk to," Caelles said.

"It was wonderful for me to be able to talk to her. She was a little older than I was and everything I was going through she had already gone through a few years earlier."

That woman hadn't even been able to get a job in her field and was working as a mining reporter instead, Caelles said. Caelles too, found sometimes doors were slammed in her face.

But Caelles doesn't criticize the mining sector for that. Anyone trying to break into a field that has been historically male or female-dominated -- such as men trying to become nurses or women becoming geologists -- is going to face challenges, she said.

And she did face some challenges.

"You really had to have nerves of steel and a backbone made of carbon to be able to stand up to some of the abuse that was thrown your way," Caelles said.

But Caelles had what she called "lucky breaks." And once she had her first job, there was no looking back. Now she and her husband run their own consulting firm.

But she never forgot how much she learned from having another woman to talk to. That's why she and a few colleagues started the Vancouver chapter of Women in Mining (WIM) almost 10 years ago. It is where women can meet other women in the field "and talk about everything from nappies to networking to negotiating," Caelles said.

"Everything seems to be up for discussion," she said.

Interested women meet the second Thursday of each month for a brown-bag lunch. Some of the lunches will feature speakers on topics of concern to women, like teaching negotiation skills -- something women are good at doing for others, but not for themselves, Caelles said. Last year, lunchtime speeches included the state of the economy and tips on how to manage money.

WIM also has some evening events throughout the year and several members have signed up to mentor students.

The group also fundraises to show that mining is part of the community. In October a WIM team will be taking part in the CIBC Run for the Cure to fight breast cancer. The Vancouver group, along with WIM Toronto, has also raised funds for a micro-lending initiative in the Townships in South Africa.

The next WIM lunch is Thursday at noon at the offices of Fasken Martineau, 550 Burrard St.

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