



EXPOSURE | CONNECTION | LEARNING

October 17, 2014  
**Making Inroads:  
Atlantic Women Entrepreneurs  
Connect with Corporate Canada**

Mount Saint Vincent University  
The Meadows - Second Floor  
166 Bedford Highway, Halifax  
Nova Scotia, Canada

Toll-free: 1-888-776-9022  
Phone: (902) 457-6449  
Fax: (902) 443-4687  
Email: [cwb@msvu.ca](mailto:cwb@msvu.ca)

[www.centreforwomeninbusiness.ca](http://www.centreforwomeninbusiness.ca)

## Making Inroads: Atlantic Women Entrepreneurs Connect with Corporate Canada

A delegation of 10 women business owners from Atlantic Canada, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI, were among the 250 who participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual WBE Canada Annual Conference in Toronto in September. Themed *Keys to Accelerate*, this fast-paced day of lively networking, business matchmaking, learning sessions and interactive roundtables was designed to build valuable connections and facilitate introductions to corporations with supplier diversity programs.

And that's exactly what **Sherry Isnor**, Senior Account Executive, Design Marketing Ltd., Bedford, NS, walked away with. Although this was her second time participating in a WBE Canada conference, it was her first as a certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE). "Attending last year totally opened my eyes that certification is a tool to leverage, which is why I got certified," she explains. "It gave me the opportunity to sign up for the matchmaking this year and I had five meetings with corporate members that WBE Canada helped set up, which was fantastic!" she says. Since the conference, Isnor has already responded to an RFQ from one of the corporations and is in conversations with another to get her foot in the door.

Another highlight for her was hearing the success stories of other women and how they follow up with corporations. "The lunchtime panel of successful WBEs was very inspirational – particularly the story from Julie Cole of Mabel's Labels, who has six kids and runs a business!"

Isnor originally heard about certification through the Centre for Women in Business (CWB) and appreciates its support. "They do a good job in preparing us to attend the conference, including bringing in an expert to help us craft a strong pitch for approaching corporations," she says.

**Janice Goguen**, Principal Advisor, Global Connexions Globales, Moncton, NB, echoes these words. "The Centre always provides Cadillac service in its support to the Atlantic Canadian delegation, with pre-conference training, on-the-ground support and follow up," she notes. "And the WBE Conference itself delivers good value for money - full of solid information, contacts and learnings." She found the session on selling to government particularly useful, with good tips and resources.

### Growth potential seen

Newly-certified WBE **Cathy Sweet**, President, Comztar Commercial Properties, Moncton, NB, thought the conference was a very good introduction to what WBE Canada is all about. "I particularly liked the 'speed dating' and interactive sessions where I could meet other WBEs and ask questions about how they are using their certification." She had some good meetings with corporate members and will value the certification based on what transpires for her business in the coming year.

Not all delegates to the Toronto conference were certified WBEs. Take **Cora Cole**, President of Move the Median in Halifax, for example. After working with CWB to get her business off the ground and finding out about supplier diversity and the potential for growth it offers, she attended the WBE Canada conference to do some fact finding. "What I marvelled at is how they combined knowledge transfer and inspiration into one day," she says. "There was a great balance that you don't typically get at other conferences... and I attend a lot of them."

Mount Saint Vincent University  
The Meadows - Second Floor  
166 Bedford Highway, Halifax  
Nova Scotia, Canada

Toll-free: 1-888-776-9022  
Phone: (902) 457-6449  
Fax: (902) 443-4687  
Email: [cwb@msvu.ca](mailto:cwb@msvu.ca)

Cole made valuable contacts and is already in touch with one of the speakers to do collaborative work. She plans to get certified through WBE Canada, hoping that it will be a source of business growth for her. "I wouldn't have gone to the conference if not for the encouragement of CWB," she adds. "I thought my business was too new for all of this, but their support has given me the confidence to want to be part of a professional organization like WBE Canada."

### Corporate members and partners impressed

**Jamie Griffiths**, Director of Supplier Development & Merchandise Strategy for Walmart, was one of the 28 corporate buyers who hosted matchmaking meetings with delegates. There were 172 such meetings in all, and Griffiths was impressed by the structured and smooth scheduling. What stood out for him was seeing the passion of attendees. "It was enlightening to discover that there are people taking risks and the road less travelled because we need innovators," he says. "The women there definitely had interesting proposals and were very eager to get feedback on how to better their own businesses to do business with large corporations."

**Reginald Humphrey**, Senior Manager, Supplier Diversity, General Motors- Global Purchasing & Supply Chain, Warren, MI, was equally impressed. For him, a highlight was the balance of activities in a compressed time frame. "They mirrored the organization's core values to provide access, certification, and growth," he says. "The day was concise, powerful, and filled with strategic engagement and development activities."

"This conference represented a significant milestone as WBE Canada rebrands and establishes itself as the national benchmark for connecting and developing certified Women Business owners in Canada," he adds. "The unified support and collaborative initiatives that were executed during this conference are evidence of a very bright and strategic future!"

Overall, the corporations were particularly pleased with the quality of the matchmaking, with many commenting on how the organizers ensured a strategic fit and on how innovative were the solutions to their needs brought forward by WBEs.

According to **Tracy Joshua**, VP, Procurement Indirect, Kellogg, Battle Creek, MI. "The 2014 *Keys to Accelerate* Canadian Conference was outstanding! The content, workshops, speakers, networking, and location were absolutely wonderful. I appreciated the opportunity to not only participate but also to moderate and facilitate a panel of courageous women and to share my research on women-owned businesses, entrepreneurship and courage."

Among the representatives of partner organizations in attendance was **Justin Lafontaine**, Project Manager, Supplier Diversity, Canadian Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. He liked the different types of structures to network throughout the day as well as the learning opportunity to hear about corporate supplier diversity programs. "We work closely both with WBE Canada and the Canadian Aboriginal & Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC) to align our program with best practices," he explains. "They serve as mentors for our program, and we're lucky in Canada to have these great collaborative relationships."

Mount Saint Vincent University  
The Meadows - Second Floor  
166 Bedford Highway, Halifax  
Nova Scotia, Canada

Toll-free: 1-888-776-9022  
Phone: (902) 457-6449  
Fax: (902) 443-4687  
Email: cwb@msvu.ca

## WBE Canada 2014 Conference: What Stood Out

- “The conference is very motivating and this year the organizers came up with new and different elements and workshops for participants. I also liked the way they organized the matchmaking – the timing and all meetings being in the same room.” *Laure Solange, Aldanel Authentic Products, PEI*
- “The sessions were really great... fantastic set up...excellent speakers ...good pace.” *Cathy Sweet, Comzta Commercial Properties, Moncton, NB*
- “The conference was another opportunity to reconnect with corporates. I had good discussions with one of the automakers who had been helpful in introducing me to Tier 1 suppliers.” *Kim Thiara, AceTRONIC Industrial Controls Inc., Mississauga, ON*
- “Great attendance, consistent excitement, and outstanding customer service throughout the day from the staff and volunteers. And the focused matchmakers allow for very candid feedback and helps launch meaningful business relationships.” *Reginald Humphrey, GM, Warren, MI*
- “The opening roundtables were a great way to start the day when you are targeting specific corporations.” *Justin Lafontaine, Canadian Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Toronto, ON*

Mount Saint Vincent University  
The Meadows - Second Floor  
166 Bedford Highway, Halifax  
Nova Scotia, Canada

Toll-free: 1-888-776-9022  
Phone: (902) 457-6449  
Fax: (902) 443-4687  
Email: [cwb@msvu.ca](mailto:cwb@msvu.ca)