May 14, 2024 |

Releases

BCCWITT: New training program will improve psychological safety and culture in construction workplaces

Stand Up for Safe Workplaces to launch in spring 2025

The BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCCWITT) today announced **Stand Up for Safe Workplaces**, a new approach to workplace culture and safety training. Developed in partnership with the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) Health & Safety Centre, Stand Up for Safe Workplaces is an innovative new program that will help participants understand diversity, equity and inclusion through the lens of workplace safety, including psychological injury prevention.

The program's development is being funded with $2,801,586 from the BC government's Workplace Innovation Fund, part of the Stronger BC: Future Ready Action Plan announced last year. BCCWITT expects to complete curriculum development and launch the training program in spring 2025.

"The BC Centre for Women in the Trades' project will enhance workplace safety by fostering a culture of inclusivity and equipping employees with skills to address pressing issues like psychological safety and harm reduction," said Lisa Beare, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. "The Workplace Innovation Fund is showing us the ingenuity of BC's construction sector. Projects like this will help test and implement new ideas to address labour shortages and prepare for a changing economy."

Based on the proven train-the-trainer model of BCCWITT’s highly successful Be More Than a Bystander program, the new Stand Up for Safe Workplaces program will deal with topics including respectful workplaces; bullying, harassment and discrimination; mental health first aid, including awareness around fatality by suicide; psychological safe workplaces; psychological injury prevention; substance use and harm reduction; and trauma informed practice.

“Our goal is to empower workers across BC change the culture of their construction workplaces, and make them more psychologically safe. The risk of bullying, harassment and discrimination hurts recruitment and retention at a time when the industry is already facing a critical labour shortage,” said BCCWITT executive director Karen Dearlove.

“Safer worksites will mean that workers from equity-priority groups — including Indigenous people, people of colour, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTIAQ+ people, newcomers and women — can meaningfully exercise their rights and pursue careers in the trades.”

Workers in the sector also face serious mental health challenges, including high rates of death by suicide and substance use, with the BC Coroner reporting that the drug poisoning crisis overwhelmingly affects men in construction.

“Stand Up for Safe Workplaces addresses barriers to health and safety by centering worker participation and culture change,” said BCFED Health & Safety Centre executive director Ishani Weera, who has been named to the program's advisory team. “It uses a proven peer education model, grounded firmly in the values of the labour movement."

“Safer, more diverse worksites benefit everyone — workers, employers and our communities,” said BC Federation of Labour president Sussanne Skidmore. “This worker-centred approach will help ease our construction labour shortage. And it’ll give more workers the chance to pursue great careers in the construction trades — along with the tools they need to help drive the shift to safety culture.”