

Energy was palpable

The trade mission included workshops, networking and matchmaking sessions. "It really was quite exciting," recalls **Candice Rice**, a Trade Commissioner with Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada and one of the recruiters. "Since no one had focused on women before, there was little awareness that women even had businesses."

A cross-country search took place to recruit interested women in every province. "I think it came as a bit of a surprise how many women owned really good businesses," adds Candice. "However, most had never exported and I remember that we even coached them on things like the need to take business cards!" As a result of the mission, awareness about exporting as a growth strategy increased and trade commissioners across the country started getting more calls from women.

"This event in a very significant way showcased the great capacity women have to pool their resources and to network for the collective greater good." This is how **Pam Heilman**, a partner at Hodgson Russ LLP in Buffalo, N.Y. and one of the sponsors, summed up the historic event. "Women supporting women is always a powerful combination. To this day I can still feel the energy that was in the room from the opening reception at the Canadian Embassy to the farewell dinner in the U.S. Senate. And I know this energy was then translated into business success by many of the women who were there."



Do Trade Missions Work?

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"I would recommend a trade mission to anyone because it's such a learning experience. The people I met were just amazing as has been the support I've received since then."

Hilda Letemplier, Pressure Pipe Steel Fabrication Ltd.

"If you are considering a trade mission, I would say do it. They are most worthwhile and in general a very enriching experience."

Suzanne L. Lebel, ALERT B&C Corporation

Milestones

The 1997 Trade Mission became the launch pad for a host of initiatives over the past decade that raised women's awareness about trade opportunities and helped catapult them onto the global stage.

These initiatives included:

- Formation of the Trade Research Coalition and the publication of its ground-breaking *Beyond Borders* report on Canadian women exporters, representing the first research of its kind in the world.
- The 1999 Canada-USA Businesswomen's Trade Summit that took place in Toronto, bringing together 250 women for business-matching and deal-making.
- The launch of the first Canadian chapters of the Organization of Women in International Trade, in Toronto in 2000 (www.owit-toronto.ca) and in Alberta in 2002 (www.owitalberta.org).
- A series of additional trade missions for women to Los Angeles, Chicago, the U.K. and Australia, as well as several virtual trade missions to forge links in the U.S. and abroad.
- Holding of an economic forum on women entrepreneurs called *Sustaining the Momentum* in 2005, with further research and recommendations.

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