

# Women entering engineering must fight sexism

by Rick Hiebert

Vancouver (CUP) - Women wanting to enter the field of engineering have a lot of sexism to work against, an inquiry chair said Nov. 16.

"We're finding a lack of sensitivity sometimes from male students. There's some sexism, some discrimination occurring both in the workplace and on campuses across the country," said Monique Frize chair of the Canadian Committee on Women in Engineering.

Frize who teaches engineering at the University of New Brunswick, is conducting public forums across the country this academic year to examine the state of women in the engineering profession.

She said after a Vancouver forum that although many universities are engaging in initiatives to promote women in engineering there are still problems that have to be addressed.

"We hear of male students who are supportive, but we're also hearing that women are feeling isolated. There's a lack of encouragement for them, pressures, harassment sometimes," Frize said.

"There's a lot of male culture, male traditions" she said. "Engineering has to become more genderless if

we're going to become more successful in attracting women and making them feel comfortable."

"I think men will be more comfortable with it as well when it changes," she said. "Some male students have told me that they feel very uncomfortable in their environment and that they were hoping that it would change."

Frize is sure her committee will come up with solutions for some of these problems. In addition to holding hearings the group plans to look at 10 campuses and 10 work sites across Canada to find national trends and problem-solving techniques. Their final report will be released at a national conference in Fredericton next May.

She said solutions will only work "if everyone, all men and women involved, want to make a change."

"The world has gone on too long without a feminine perspective on technological development," she said "Men and women working together will provide some solutions."

Several of the hearing participants addressed the problem women wanting to study engineering face today.

Carol Gran, the B.C. minister of women's affairs, said women are often victims of the sexism of male students.

"Women deserve, after

centuries of discrimination to be given priority for as long as it takes to establish and realize equality," she said.

UBC graduate Catherine Roome said she had had enough "horror stories" in her undergraduate experience to "last a lifetime".

"It is time schools stopped being isolated research stations and realized that educating

students to be part of their society is part of their job," she said.

"You sometimes read things in the newspapers, things you wish you didn't have to read about engineering schools," Sidney Mindess of the UBC applied science faculty said, "but universities are finally beginning to make some changes."

"What I found tough about being a woman engineering student," said engineer Jane Farquharson, "was never feeling like I really belonged, no matter how hard I tried, because the attitudes and actions of the engineering student body (as a whole) were shaped and dominated by men as they have been since time immemorial."

## Day of Creative Planning and Healing

(UNB-PRI) Whether the face paint is real or imaginary, finding the clown that hides inside each of us can help people deal with the world in a more positive and healing manner.

That's one of the approaches that will be explored during a Day of Creative Planning and Healing for women survivors and healers of childhood sexual abuse and incest, to be held at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton.

Sponsored by the Women's Healing Centre through the UNB counselling services department, the event is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 9, from 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the Alumni Memorial Building on the Fredericton campus.

The morning will be devoted to a business meeting to discuss future directions for the Women's Healing Centre,

while participants will be able to choose either a clown workshop or a writing workshop for the afternoon session.

The clown workshop will be led by Susan Beach, a professional facilitator who says her own life was completely changed after taking a clown and mask workshop.

The writing workshop will be guided by Gail Taylor, whose healing orientation is based on a belief that "every person is a gift whose expressive unwrapping can help save the self, and the planet."

One of the organizers of the day, Mary Louise Luck of UNB counselling services, says the events are intended not only to help the participants at a very personal level, but also to provide an opportunity for participants to help the

Women's Healing Centre.

"This day will give us a chance to continue that creative planning process with everyone's new ideas and fresh energies."

Ms Luck explained that, because of the sensitivity of the issues to be dealt with, the need for confidentiality will be addressed within the workshop sessions.

The fee for participants in the Day of Creative Planning and Healing is \$15 and does not cover the noon and evening meals. There is a limit of 15 participants for the clown workshop, so those who want to be involved in that particular activity should specify it in their registration application.

For further information, call Mary Louise Luck or Serena Francis at 453-4820.

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