

AC Notes for Diversity Symposium 2023

Welcome everyone to our annual Western Diversity and Inclusion Symposium

I am privileged to open this important event. I will start with our land

acknowledgement: We acknowledge and thank the Lkwungen (Lekwungen)

People, also known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations communities, for

allowing us to live, work, and play on their lands. We also give thanks to the

ancestors, supernatural ones, hereditary leaders and matriarchs, creatures big

and small for looking after the rich resources and cultural teachings of this

beautiful land.

I'm tired of this. Tired of standing in front of a group of people who get it, and expressing outrage only to find out afterward about more cases that show me that some people just don't get it and that those people aren't here today.

Last year I stood before you and told you that I had no time for people who intentionally and repeatedly singled out and harassed individuals or groups based on gender, religion, race, sexual preference, etc. I then said that, should justified complaints about such people come across my desk, I would do everything in my power to throw them out of the Coast Guard.

The cold hard reality is that it's very, very difficult to fire someone from the Public Service, and people who have rightfully complained about being subject to harassment know it.

I'm going to throw out some terms for you to think about...I'll ask you to reflect on how these words or terms make you feel. Sorry, I don't have a word cloud app to help us...

Zero tolerance, revictimized, old boys club, duty to report, bystander, zero consequences, but he's a "good guy." There's a lot emptiness or hypocrisy in some of those words and terms, and a lot sentiment worthy of eye-rolling. I get it. Zero tolerance is my favourite useless term. The reality is that we don't have zero tolerance and that there are processes that prevent us from doing what we really want to do, processes that prevent doing the right thing.

I was reminded of how far we still have to go when I sat in on a Women in Fleet discussion that DC Ops Chris Henderson hosted here 3 weeks ago. The women in the meeting, all different people at various points in their careers who have experienced scarily similar negative treatment (and that's a mild way to put it), but who also have different ways of dealing with discrimination and different approaches to moving forward. All of which are relevant and justified. Some were tired of the ongoing "efforts" that fail to produce results and just want to carry on without more meetings for women or more employment equity. Others wanted justice, public justice and tangible action and protection.

There are some action items that Sue, Karen, and I started talking about. They relate to women but also to other communities within the Coast Guard. I regret that some initiatives aren't ready to be announced here, but they will be brought forward for discussion and feedback in the near future. If anyone is in doubt, the Coast Guard "Me Too" moment is coming.

In listening to the group of amazing women, there was also room for some optimism. No-one was weak. One line particularly struck me and showed me the strength that has been forged by fire. One person said, “I dare you to harass me.” That statement resonated with me. It struck me that this one voice with a powerful message is a perfect rallying cry to add to the culture of the Coast Guard. Let’s all take on that motto. While she may say, “I dare you to harass me,” we can say “I dare you to harass anyone.”

- Introduce Marc Mes
- Allyship is important – As public servants, it is our responsibility to treat all people with dignity and promote a healthy and respectful workplace
- By speaking up when you hear or see discrimination and exclusionary behaviour, you are standing in support of others
- I want to recognize the team that organized today’s event: Kaitlyn Scurr, Brianna Snider, Skye Mcewan, Brandy Gladson Marc Hahlen, Monique McMahan, Sydney Cunliffe, Susan Pickrell, Nicola Mancey, and Karen Calla

I will now pass the podium over to Captain Susan Pickrell, Senior Director of Fleet who will introduce the theme of the symposium and an overview of today’s agenda