

AWARDS AND DEMOGRAPHICS – WHY ARE WOMEN UNDER-REPRESENTED?

By: Eva Drivet M.Sc., PGeol.

GeoWomen is an affiliate of CSPG and AWSN with strong ties with the CSEG mentorship program. Their mandate is primarily to remove barriers to women in the geosciences and balance gender inequities in the workforce. The team driving this organization includes four exceptional professional geologists driven by positive energy, inspiration and drive to collaborate with other professional groups; Lisa Doyle, Jocelyn Keith-Asante, Jennifer Kingsbury and Mandy Williams. This spring, they discussed with 2020 CSPG President Jen Russel-Houston, President Elect Neil Watson and the CSPG executive team ways to improve diversity in the CSPG Awards. In response, the Recognition Committee was initiated, and I was invited to chair it. Recently, geophysicist Chelsea Squires joined me to assist in understanding recognition demographics on the CSEG side of the Geo-community. Two key objectives were identified:

1. Gather data from the CSPG, CSEG and APEGA on past award recipients, and demographics of the selection committees.
2. Proactively submit nominations for deserving women geo-professionals for current CSPG, CSEG and APEGA awards.

Focus and approach

Given my background as a geologist, my initial focus is on the CSPG community. The CSPG staff, CSPG President Jen Russel-Houston, and Astrid Arts provided help compiling the data. As per prior assessments done by Astrid Arts, about 25% of the CSPG membership (2014 and 2019 data) are currently women geologists. Within that pool, Gen X and Millennials comprise a more significant proportion compared to the Baby Boomers (Figure 1, Astrid Arts pers. Comm. 2020). This information provides the context and background for reviewing CSPG award demographics.

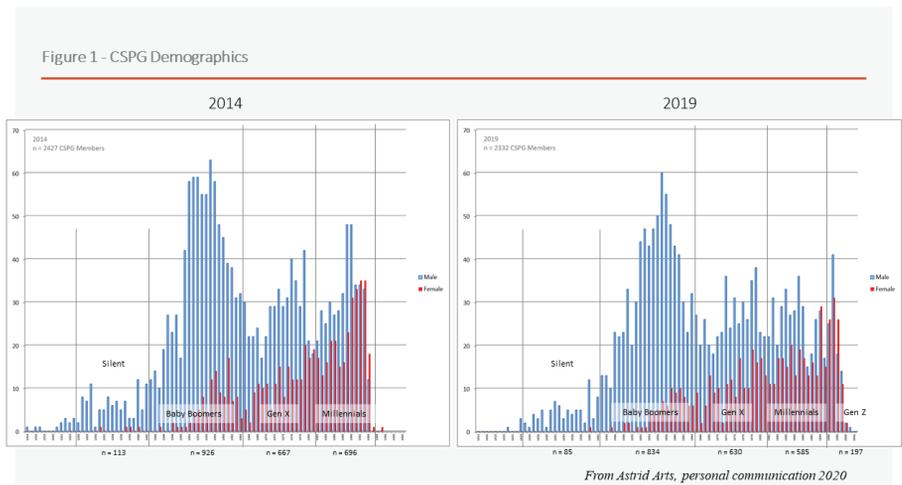


Figure 1

Gender data was collected on CSPG award recipients (refer to “Awards” tab on the CSPG website; Figure 2). In instances where first names of recipients are not reported (as is common in data pre-1990) and the individual’s gender could not be identified by first name, a “gender not determined” was assigned. The award was marked with an asterisk to indicate an incomplete database. This will be updated once the information is provided – but this data set offers initial insights on the current status. For some awards (E.g. Tracks Award) an individual may have been a recipient more than once. In these cases, the individual was counted only once. Gender distribution on the selection committee was also reviewed. For the President’s Award, recipients were Convention Chairs and Past Presidents.

What is the current status of recognition for this minority group within the CSPG Awards?

Figure 2 is a bar chart that captures preliminary data available on gender distribution in the CSPG Awards recipients; 3 to 14% of award recipients are women. The bottom row in blue indicates the gender distribution on the selection

committee (2020 data for a snapshot; data from previous years available upon request). Female geologists were absent from the selection committees on the Honorary Membership and R.J.W. Douglas Medal, and have been added very recently to the Stanley Slipper Award selection committee. The Link Award and Medal of Merit have 11% and 16% female representation respectively on the selection committee. The Hunter and Track Awards have a 50% female representation, with one female and one male making up each of those committee. Of the eight CSPG awards, four are named after professional geologists (Stanley Slipper Gold Medal, R.J.W. Douglas Medal, Link Award, H.M. Hunter) – and all of them are males. This assessment will be expanded to other professional organizations such as APEGA and CSEG.

What is this data telling us?

1. While women professionals make up 25% of the CSPG membership, representation for recognition and awards is only 3 to 14% (Figures 1 and 2).
2. Gender distribution on selection

Figure 2. Gender Distribution of CSPG Award Recipients

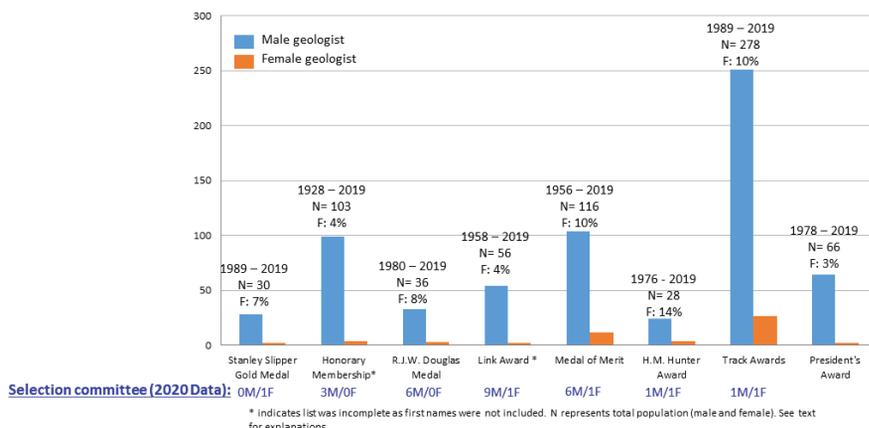


Figure 2

committees is well balanced for the Hunter, Track Awards, and recently the Stanley Slipper with a female professional assigned as chair. Other selection committees could benefit from having more gender diversity (e.g. Honorary Membership, Link Award, Medal of Merit, R.J.W. Douglas Medal).

3. As of today, all “named” CSPG awards are named after professional male geologists, honouring their legacy and contributions in their field of expertise

Overall, women comprise only a quarter of the CSPG membership, which is one of the main factors in the under-representation for recognition (Astrid Arts, pers. Comm. 2020). Within this group, there are several dozen outstanding, well established, women professionals who have all the merits, achievements, competence and accomplishments to be eligible as potential candidates for some of these awards – and they deserve to be recognized. Moreover, there are driven female professionals in our geo-community who could contribute and provide a balanced perspective on award selection committees.

What are the solutions?

In order to better represent highly talented female geo-professionals, four key steps will need to be implemented and we need your help:

1. Raise awareness of this issue within the CSPG community. Discussions between GeoWomen and the CSPG selection committees have started. We

have received very positive feedback and support from CSPG President Jennifer Russel-Houston, President Elect Neil Watson and the CSPG executive team on our recommendations to include more diversity within the committees. Steps are being taken to implement these positive changes.

2. As a CSPG affiliate committee, GeoWomen is pro-actively nominating highly successful and deserving female geo-professionals for existing CSPG awards. If you have anyone in mind, please send your nomination to membership@cspg.org. Ask your colleagues (any genders) if they know someone deserving of these awards.

3. GeoWomen is in the process of creating two awards, eligible to all genders, named after high profile and deserving women geologists to preserve their legacy, and ensure that up and coming junior female geo-professionals can see themselves in the role of successful and talented high performers. The intent is for these two awards to reside under the CSPG organization (pending approval from the CSPG board) so that they receive the same level of recognition and credibility as the current CSPG awards named after male geo-professionals. We are proposing one named after Patricia J. Lee, whose many contributions include her involvement in the discovery of the 2 TCF Caroline gas field (http://history.alberta.ca/energyheritage/oil/the-quest-for-sustainability/women-in-the-oil-patch-1950s-to-2000/patricia-

lee-geologist.aspx.). The second award will be named after Dr. Helen Belyea (thank you to Astrid Arts for that recommendation; more info at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Belyea). Dr Belyea was the first female Canadian Geological Survey geologist to work in the field alongside «men only» crews, who wrote over 30 scientific papers and made major contributions to the Alberta Geological Society’s «Atlas of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin».

4. Connect with the CSPG to promote women’s professional achievements - for example source technically strong female speakers for Technical Luncheons, and encourage women geologists/geophysicists in academia and industry to submit technical papers to reputable scientific journals such as the Bulletin of Canadian Petroleum Geology. Contact CSPG at membership@cspg.org if you have suggestions on this front.

Volunteering opportunities available:

I am actively recruiting one co-chair for the Recognition Committee who would liaise with APEGA. All genders are welcome to apply. I would encourage anyone interested in assisting, or wanting to help with other aspects (e.g. award demographics with APEGA) to contact CSPG at membership@cspg.org and get involved. It’s a great way to network. It’s also an opportunity to bring awareness in our Geo-community on diversity and inclusivity, and find solutions to implement positive changes.

I have been so impressed with the work Lisa, Jocelyn, Jennifer and Mandy have accomplished to date and how they collaborate with other resources and professional organizations. The support and leadership of CSPG 2020 President Jen Russel-Houston, President Elect Neil Watson and the CSPG team; namely Kasandra Amaro, with this initiative have been instrumental. Great progress has started to happen. I am looking forward to join efforts with Chelsea and learn more on the CSEG front. There is significant momentum right now, and I encourage you to take action. The benefits have such a valuable ripple effect on our geo-community.

Thank you for reading this note. Best wishes to all of you. Stay healthy and well! 🍁