

# A Guide to Launching a National Strategy to Empower Women “A Canadian Experience”



**We  
Support**



[www.weprinciples.org](http://www.weprinciples.org)

Respectfully Submitted by  
Sheila Crook, October 2015  
Global Community Champion for Women's Economic Empowerment

**TABLE OF CONTENTS..... 2**

**HOW OUR JOURNEY BEGAN ..... 3**

**GETTING STARTED ..... 4**

**RESOURCES TO UNDERSTANDING WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT ..... 6**

**STEP ONE: DEVELOPING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM/NETWORK..... 7**

**STEP TWO: DEVELOPING YOUR EMPOWER WOMEN STRATEGIC DIRECTION ..... 8**

**STEP THREE: TEST/PILOT YOUR OUTREACH AND TRAINING RESOURCES ..... 9**

**STEP FOUR: COMMUNICATE AND PROMOTE YOUR VISION FOR WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT ..... 10**

**STEP FIVE: TRAIN AND DEVELOP NATIONAL EMPOWER WOMEN ADVOCATES ..... 11**

**STEP SIX: COACHING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ..... 12**

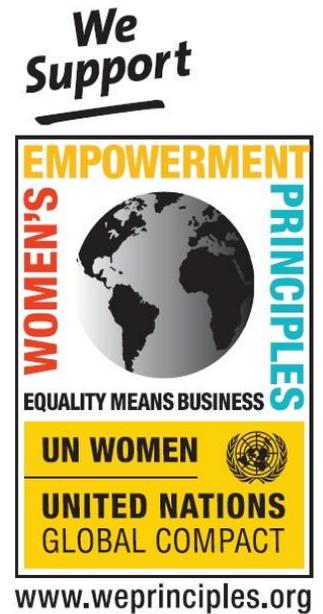
**EXPANDING BEYOND YOUR NETWORK: NATIONAL COALITION TO EMPOWER WOMEN..... 13**

**EMPOWER WOMEN TIME-LINE: THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE ..... 14**

**CLOSING REMARKS: OUR WORK CONTINUES..... 15**

I would first like to acknowledge the vision and leadership provided by the UN Women and UN Global Compact teams. The foresight in bringing together these two very distinct yet powerful forces has paved the way for an explosive movement to empower women. The [United Nations Global Compact](#) has long been recognized for its role in cultivating worldwide sustainable business practices and [UN Women](#) for promoting the formidable role that equality for women plays in long-term sustainable development around the globe.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) actively participated as a stakeholder in the UN Women & UN Global Compact Consultations during the development phase of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) across 2009. BPW International further engaged its affiliates worldwide in promoting and understanding the potential of WEPs through an introductory WEPs tool kit and Project WEPs initiative.



BPW Canada as a founding member of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women was quick to recognize the important role that the Women's Empowerment Principles could play in achieving economic equality for women in Canada. The BPW Canada National President of the day, Doris Hall, and I as their strategic advisor engaged the national leadership team in developing and implementing a women's empowerment awareness campaign for our network of clubs across Canada. Our Women's Empowerment strategy has evolved over the past few years through the ongoing support of BPW International and immediate and past presidents Freda Miriklis and Liz Benham, and the Ministry Responsible for Women's Issues and the Status of Women Canada Directorate. In addition, we are very proud that Canada through Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development provided the start-up funding for the UN Women-Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment recently rebranded EmpowerWomen.org. This powerful platform in conjunction with the WEPS initiative has created a rich environment in which to advance our nations' collective efforts to achieve equality and in particular gender equality for its citizens. Insights gained from our journey toward women's empowerment through a national network and through what has more recently become the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women will be shared in this step-by-step summary of activities.

As a 2015 UN Women Global Community Champion for Women's Economic Empowerment I wish to thank my coach Eduardo Pereira and the empowerwomen.org team for their passion and guidance. This guide is a result of your commitment. In addition the ongoing support by Lauren Gula and the Global Compact WEPs team and the synergy generated by the other 2015 Canadian Champions, Ethel Côté, Zari Gill, Tsering Kongtsa and Yelena Maleyev inspired me to share this vision for a national strategy to empower women.



To set the stage for establishing a national strategy to empower women it is essential to understand the fundamental principles for Women's Empowerment and to place these principles into the historical and current context of women's equality and economic empowerment within your country.

In Canada, as it is for all nations; the experience of all citizens is a direct reflection of the status of women, women's rights and the equal treatment of all sexes. The women's suffragette movement in Canada celebrates its centennial in 2016. There are many significant milestones, stories and events of resistance, survival, inspiration and courage spanning these 100 years. There are those that mark the advancement of women's rights in Canada, while others reflect stalled progress and demonstrate the work yet to be done to achieve gender equality across our nation.



The "Persons Case" in 1929 where the Famous 5: Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy and Irene Parlby, succeeded in having women defined as "persons" in Section 24 of the British North America Act and thereby, eligible for appointment to the Senate is a historical milestone. It is interesting that the word "person" as noted on the Global Perspectives on Personhood, Rights and Responsibilities website always had a much broader meaning than its strict legal definition, and it therefore had been used to exclude women from university degrees, from voting, from entering the professions and from holding public office. The definition of "person" became a threshold test of women's equality. Only when Canadian women had been legally recognized as persons could they gain access to public life. After 1929, the door was open for women to

lobby for further changes to achieve equality.

Although, the movement for equal rights has made progress since 1929, as depicted in the film entitled [Constitute!](#) the women who ascended on Parliament Hill on February 14, 1981 to have gender equality rights entrenched in the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms would say that too little progress has been made across the last 30 years. Despite advances through the introduction of Maternity and Paternity Leave, or with women now comprising over 50% of our graduates from university and college and entering the work force in record numbers the struggle for gender equality in the workplace and in political service continues.



Unveiling of plaque sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women outside the Senate Chambers on Parliament Hill. Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King and guests commemorating the five Alberta women whose efforts resulted in the Persons Case, which established the rights of women to hold public office in Canada.

Few would argue that Women's Equality and Economic Empowerment is a complex issue. The persistent Wage Gap, under-representation of women on boards, in senior leadership and in government, and up to this point the lack of a national strategy to address the pervasive gender-based cultural bias towards violence against women and girls, the missing and murdered Aboriginal women, human trafficking, treatment of immigrant workers and the all important issue of National Child Care are indicators that Canada can do much better.

Perhaps our progress in creating a culture of inclusivity and equality relative to promoting a progressive stance on gay marriage, broadened recognition of sexual orientation beyond heterosexuality to include Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer,(LGBTIQ) and making accessibility a fundamental right to all citizens can offer insights in achieving gender equality. By applying these same constructs to gender, we can leverage the untapped potential of 50% of Canadian citizens to actively participate and equally contribute to the long-term economic stability of our nation. The growing body of evidence for the social and business case for women's economic empowerment suggests that the time is now to engage both men and women in a movement to make gender equality a reality in our country and around the world. [Planet 50-50 by 2030](#) is within our grasp.



We suggest beginning your exploration of what Women's Empowerment may mean to you and your country by reviewing the body of work completed by the joint UN Women and UN Global Compact [Women's Empowerment Principles WEPs](#) initiative. This can provide a framework for you to assess the historical and current status of women's equality and economic empowerment in your nation. Although, not available during our early work we have since incorporated the [EmpowerWomen.org](#) platform as a central component of our strategy to empower women. The Empowerwomen.org platform offers an opportunity to explore, connect, discuss, learn and discover how each of us as individual men, women and nations can best support the movement for women's economic empowerment. This is a remarkable resource and we are so very proud that [Canada provided the start-up funding in 2013](#). The full potential of this platform is yet to be realized. We anticipate more exciting news about further enhancements to this tremendous resource in early 2016 and encourage you to use the empowerwomen.org as a focal point in your communication and promotional empower women national strategy. The next page provides a sample of the evolving list of resources used to assist in assessing and understanding what Women's Economic Empowerment will mean to the Men, Women, Children and families across Canada. As our journey progressed and the momentum for women's empowerment grew, so too did this list. It is important to be open to new information, tools and resources on your journey to empowerment.

Supporting Research, Articles and Papers

McKinsey Article: <a href="#">Changing Companies Minds about Women</a>	18 Pages
McKinsey Article: <a href="#">Women Matter 2013 Gender Diversity in Top Management</a>	18 Pages
McKinsey Article: <a href="#">Unlocking the Full Potential of Women at Work</a>	14 pages
McKinsey Article: <a href="#">Unlocking the Full Potential of Women in the Economy</a> (US)	7 Pages
Price Waterhouse Cooper: <a href="#">Gender Diversity in the Workplace 2010</a>	20 Pages
Deloitte Global Corporate Governance: <a href="#">2nd Ed-Women in the boardroom: A global perspective</a>	28 Pages
<a href="#">RBC Diversity Advantage</a> A Case for the 21st Century Economy	23 Pages
PRME Working Group on Gender Equality: <a href="#">Discussion Paper</a>	13 Pages
<a href="#">World Economic Forum – the Global Gender Gap 2013; (2014)</a> pull most current year	397 Pgs
Harvard Business Review: <a href="#">The Female Economy: About Women's Purchasing Power 2009-2014</a>	website
<a href="#">Catalyst: Increasing Gender Diversity on Boards: Current Index of Formal Approaches</a>	website
<a href="#">WHY WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS</a> : Understanding the Emergence of our Next Economic Revolution. (Excerpt summary of book written By): Avivah Wittenberg-Cox and Alison Mason	1 Page
<a href="#">Feminism in Canada: Wikipedia.org</a>	
<a href="#">Constitute! The Film</a> : The Canadian Charter or Rights and Freedoms and the Story behind Sections 15 and 28 – February 14, 1981.	video
<a href="#">Women's Economic Empowerment: Guidance Notes</a> Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada updated 2014/09/29	12 Pages
Web Pages reviewed frequently for updates and new Women's Empowerment Resources	
<a href="#">BPW Canada Women's Empowerment Web Page</a> & <a href="#">Resolutions and Briefs</a>	
<a href="#">Empowerwomen.org - The Movement for Women's Economic Empowerment</a>	
<a href="#">UN Global Compact Website</a>	
<a href="#">WEPs Principles Website</a>	
<a href="#">UN Women Website</a>	

Once you have pulled together pertinent information and resources to assess the historical and current status of women's economic empowerment and equality in your country you are ready to move into action.

**Step one** is about establishing a Women's Empowerment Leadership Team that will help to set the course of your work. In Canada, as members of the executive board for a national organization that had been working for women's equality since 1930, [BPW Canada](#) – The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women, we benefited from an immediate access to a well-developed network of clubs across the country.

We began small with a handful of dedicated members, keen to discover more about how



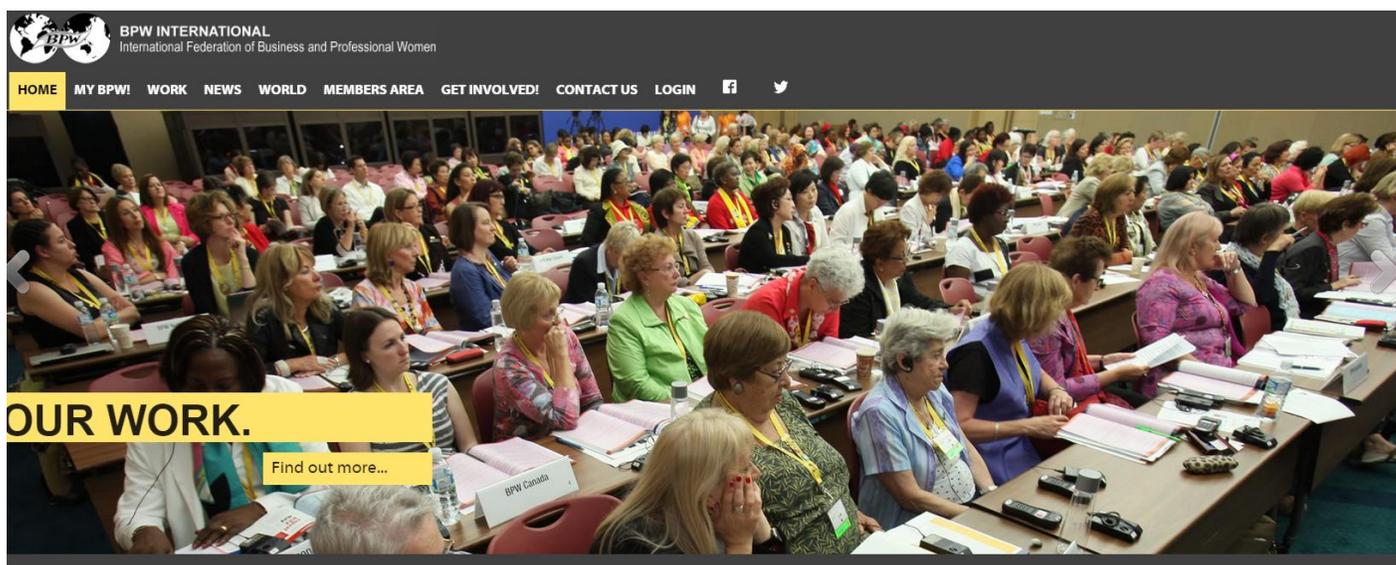
the Women's Empowerment Principles could be introduced to our network. We found that being able to leverage an existing non partisan and well established network across Canada accelerated our initial efforts. Approaching the topic of women's empowerment from a broad perspective with the backing of a credible organization also helped to open doors. In particular, not being seen as approaching the issue of empowerment from a pure business or labour perspective provided an opportunity to develop common ground among a wide range of interested stakeholders.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women has national affiliates in over 100 countries and I am sure would be pleased to work in partnership to support your efforts. To determine if a club operates in your region contact BPW International @ <http://www.bpw-international.org/world>.

To benefit from an established national network you may decide to work with a single national organization, or you may choose to cultivate a national alliance between a broad network of organizations from the beginning. Either way, the next step is to engage your leadership team in developing your Empower Women strategy.

## Step Two: Developing Your Empower Women Strategic Direction

To gain support for your Empower Women strategy we suggest that you fully engage the leadership team of the national organization or leaders in the national alliance that you have chosen to help spearhead your Women's Empowerment efforts in defining your plan. Fortunately, the Women's Empowerment Principles were introduced to us by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women at the International Leadership forum which ran in conjunction with the CSW54 Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2010. It inspired us to develop a Women's Empowerment information session for the BPW Canada National Board of Directors. This session placed the Women's Empowerment Principles in context with the key strategic areas established by the national executive. If you are able to partner with a National Federation of the Business and Professional Women you can also tap into an existing network that has access to arrange of resources and insights into the benefits of leveraging the Women's Empowerment Principles for positive change.



Search the BPW International Website

BPW develops the professional, business and leadership potential of women on all levels through advocacy, mentoring, networking, skill building and economic empowerment programs and projects around the world.

Business and Professional Women Mission Statement

Regardless which national organization you choose to partner with, or whether you decide to pull together several national organizations to serve as your leadership team, from the onset it will be important for your empower women leadership team to clearly see how a national empower women strategy can benefit them, their members, women at large and your nation as a whole.

Benefits to Establishing a National Empower Women Strategy:

- Provides an opportunity to tap into and engage a large and diverse group of men and women who share the common goal of advancing women's economic empowerment
- Accelerates the advancement of women's empowerment, one woman, one community and one nation at a time
- Builds synergy and momentum as stakeholders from private sector business, civil society, academia, government and labour step up to promote women's economic empowerment
- Provides corporations, organizations and associations committed to promoting women's equality a clear and tangible proactive framework to; regroup and re-affirm their vision, values and key strategic goals,
- Engages members in meaningful activity to advance women's economic empowerment and improve the status of women in their organization, community and nation.

### Step Three: Test/Pilot Your Outreach and Training Resources

With the support of a well informed leadership team, you are ready to develop and test an outreach strategy appropriate for your country. There are a host of resources available today to assist you in creating a customized approach best suited to your circumstance. We are pleased to provide you with a few key sample documents that have evolved into what we use today to engage stakeholders in discussion about how they can advance Women's Empowerment in Canada. One of the most recent and most exciting additions to our outreach strategy is the Empowerwomen.org – online movement for Women's Economic Empowerment. This technology enables individual women to further their economic goals while creating a global community of men and women interested in driving women's economic empowerment at the local, national and international level. We anticipate that fully leveraging this resource and the anticipated enhancements expected to be launched in early 2016 will serve to only strengthen this global resource as additional ways to connect at a local or national level will provide national empower women champions and economic empowerment advocates a forum to share, learn and connect.

#### Sample Documents:

- [The Canadian Coalition to Empower Women – Introductory Letter](#)
- [The Canadian Coalition to Empower Women – Why Now](#)
- [The Canadian Coalition to Empower Women – Statement of Support](#)

Once you have drafted your introductory working materials you can initiate preliminary outreach activities to test their effectiveness. We suggest that you begin by approaching stakeholders with whom you already have established some credibility or have an existing relationship. You can use these meetings to gain valuable insights into which aspects of the Women's Empowerment Principles are of interest to potential signatories, to develop additional leads for future meetings and to refine your working documents and approach. Meetings with the government of the day, representatives from the other party women's issues critics and local Members of Parliament all served to help us form our strategy.

It is important that you do your homework prior to making the first contact so that you can best position your request to meet and to ask for their support in advancing women's empowerment. In our case we make it clear that support is purely by way of becoming a signatory to the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women and where appropriate to also sign the UN Women/Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles Statement of Support.

Mayor Ted Adlem centre, with Connie Friesen and Heather Stewart BPW Mission, BC.



**Rona Ambrose:** Minister of Public Works and Minister Responsible for Status of Women centre right 2012.



**Kelly Leitch:** Minister of Public Works, and Minister Responsible for Status of Women 2015.



Selkirk & District Chamber of Commerce: Connie Repko President & Sheri Skalesky right, BPW Canada President Colleen Allan 2014.

#### **Step Four: Communication and Promotion**

Once the outreach strategy and introductory materials were tested we sponsored a WEPs Gala event in conjunction with our 2012 National Convention. This event was a part of a comprehensive communication strategy to promote the Women's Empowerment Principles and to engage our membership in a series of women's empowerment webinars scheduled through 2013.

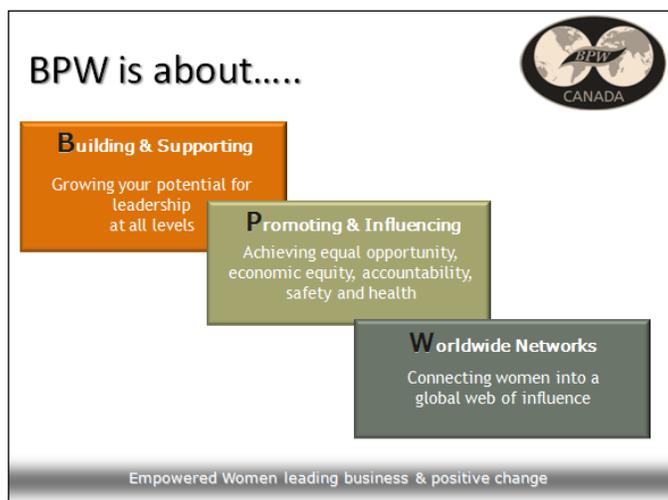
The WEPs Gala Dinner, featured Liz Benham, then BPW International President as the Key Note speaker and provided a forum to recognize the early supporters of the Women's Empowerment Principles that had expressed a commitment to advance women's empowerment in their respective businesses and organizations.

Delegates attending the 2012 National Convention were provided additional details regarding how the Women's Empowerment Principles were closely aligned with the BPW Canada national strategy to empower women.



The launch of the BPW Canada WEPs awareness and promotion campaign was in direct support of our ongoing efforts to achieve greater representation of women on boards and in leadership roles in business and political life. The WEPs was further clearly aligned with our Equal Pay activities and initiatives designed to eliminate the gender wage gap and promote women's economic empowerment.

The Delegates, serving as the spokespersons for their respective clubs were asked to take this message back to their clubs and communities and were invited to designate one or two club members interested in learning more about WEPs and who were willing to participate in our Getting Started with WEPs introductory Webinars.



"Each woman, as a citizen, must bring to the national policy of her own country, the contribution of forward-looking and constructive thought followed by determined action. Each woman must dedicate herself to protect and promote the interests of all other women in business and the professions."

Lena Madesin Phillips

Founding President BPW International 1930

## Step Five: Train and Develop National Empower Women Advocates

Based on expressed interest, the Getting Started with WEPs Webinars were scheduled and conducted with members from clubs across Canada through to 2014. These webinars were built around the Getting Started with Women's Empowerment Club Resource package which included links to the key introductory documents presented on page 9 of this document. The club resource package for our Empower Women advocates also included sample email correspondence, a meeting preparation checklist, recommended meeting resource package content and sample scripts that could be customized by local club women's empowerment advocates.

We are currently working in partnership with a team of academic curriculum design developers to convert these webinars into self-directed learning resources that can be used by any stakeholder, across Canada interested in advancing women's economic empowerment.



### Getting Started Webinar Agenda/Objectives

- How to make the first approach
- Preparing for the meeting
- Conducting the meeting
  - The 7 Principles from your listeners perspective
  - Review Statement of Support
  - Obtain signature/support
  - Outline Next Steps: BPW Canada Follow-up
- Meeting follow-up activities



Sample Webinar Agenda

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CANADA  
"GETTING STARTED"

Club Resource Package





The movement for women's economic empowerment

Keeping track of your training materials and the dates your advocates completed their training will be helpful to ensure that your advocates are kept current with the most recent information and resources. We used a simple excel spreadsheet to record our training sessions.

In addition we use a tracking tool to record the signatories to the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women in addition to those signatories that met the criteria for the UN Women/UN Global Compact WEPs initiative. We found it helpful to keep record of signatories to our different levels of government, Municipal, Provincial and National. We also separated private and public CEOs and those signatories that met the criteria for signing the UN WEPs statement of

support. As the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women progresses and we learn more about the enhancements to the empowerwomen.org platform, we anticipate creating more sophisticated mechanisms that can further assist with automated follow-up, building collaboration and providing ongoing support.

**BPW Canada Women's Empowerment Initiative**  
UN Women's Empowerment Principles and Canadian Coalition to Empower Women  
**Statement of Support Signatories as of 2015-09-08**

Women's Empowerment - Canada Signatory Total Tally

Government			CEOs/Civil Society	
Federal	Provincial	Municipal	Private	Public
MPs	MPPs/MLAs	Council	CEOs	CEOs
7	4	4	20	6

UN Women/UN Global Compact
CEOs Corporations
30 or more employees
4

(of the Total Private CEOs who meet the UN Criteria)

41

Total Signatories

Pending				
Government			CEOs	
Federal	Provincial	Municipal	Private	Public
MPs	MPPs/MLAs	Council	CEOs	CEOs
0	0	0	5	8

13

Pending Signatories

## Step Six: Coaching and Continuous Improvement

It was not long after we began conducting our Getting Started with WEPs webinars that we realized the need for ongoing coaching support. We began conducting quarterly coaching sessions with our Empower Women Advocates in 2014 and saw the benefit of having advocates share their successes and challenges. Out of these sessions additional tools and resources were developed. Specifically the Women's Empowerment self-assessment tool, which provided stakeholders with examples of how each of the seven principles could be embedded into an organizations routine operations. It also provided guidance in exploring potential measurements that they could use to assess where they have strengths and where there are opportunities for further advancement.

This tool was developed using the guidance document published through the UN Women and UN Global Compact [WEPs Transparency and Reporting documents](#) on the Women's Empowerment Principles website. Other supporting resources that were produced to meet needs identified during the coaching sessions included; a [WHY NOW Document](#), [Benefits to Becoming a Signatory](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

If your approach to establishing a National Coalition to Empower Women, is similar to the Canadian experience i.e. beginning with a network through a single National Organization, you may determine, as did we, that to accelerate your efforts you will need to expand your strategy beyond your organization.



## ***Expanding Beyond your Network: A National Coalition to Empower Women is born***

Working to expand our efforts beyond the BPW Canada network began immediately following the 2014 National Convention in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Discussions with the UN Women and UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Team determined that much could be gained by broadening our efforts beyond the UN WEPs focus on CEO's to include collaboration with small business owners, civil society, MUSH organizations- (municipalities, universities, colleges and hospitals), business and labour associations and government representatives at all levels across our nation.

The Canadian Coalition to Empower Women will continue to promote and support the Women's Empowerment Principles and build upon the technological strengths of the empowerwomen.org online movement for women's economic empowerment. The goal of the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women is to provide a forum to bring together stakeholders from all sectors to advance equality between men and women, boys and girls, recognizing that it is essential to build strong economies, establish more stable and just societies, and to improve the quality



BPW Canada Rally was launched at the BPW Ontario Provincial Conference with a simultaneous email invitation issued to Clubs across Canada. Results were celebrated that the National AGM in Winnipeg Manitoba in August, 2015

of life for women, men, families and communities.

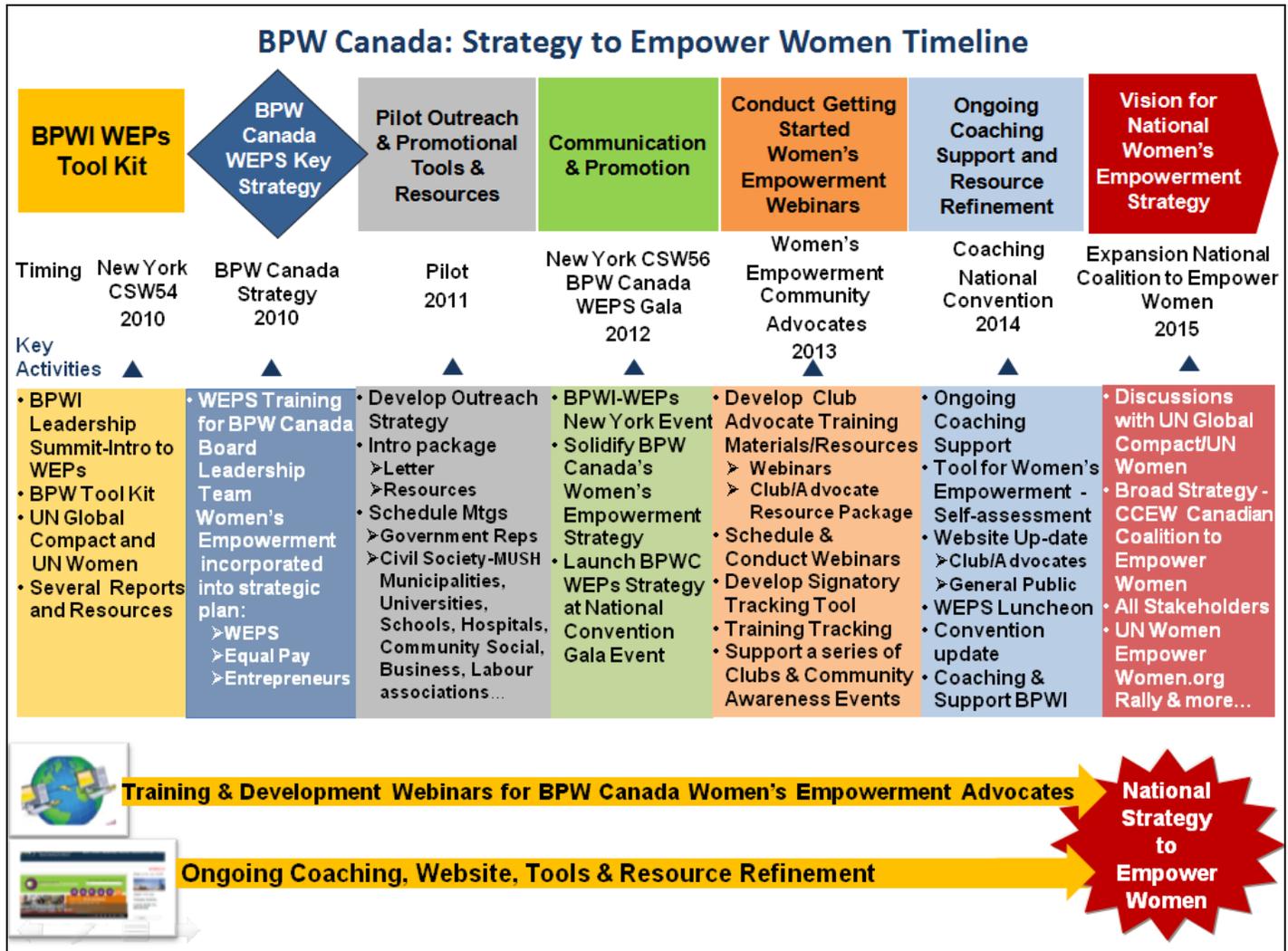
Integrating the Empowerwomen.org platform as a central component of our expanded national strategy to empower women in Canada took root during my work as a Global Community Champion for Women's Economic Empowerment. Working with the Empowerwomen.org team we established a [customized BPW Canada Empower Women Rally](#).

Building upon the rally experience during the orientation phase of the 2015 Global Champions for Women's Economic Empowerment, we launched a month long rally. We gained great insight into the role that the Empowerwomen.org platform could play in a National Coalition to Empower Women. Statistics indicated that during the rally period almost 70% of all Canadian registrants to the Empowerwomen.org platform were directly linked to the BPW Canada Rally.

We anticipate that the enhancements to the Empower Women Global platform will provide additional ways to connect all stakeholders, men and women from across your country interested in sharing best practices and will promote open dialogue and collaboration to explore solutions to persisting challenges to women's economic empowerment in your nation. We are confident that leveraging this technology with the solid framework of the Women's Empowerment Principles offers an exponential factor in advancing women's economic empowerment in Canada and in your country. We also expect that the enhancements will also provide future national Global Champions a powerful forum to share their project work and engage in collaborative, impactful initiatives that can be implemented at the local level and simultaneously shared on the global stage.

## Empower Women Time-line: The Canadian Experience

The timeline below depicts the steps outlined throughout this document and provides a graphical representation of our journey to advance women's economic empowerment and implement the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women.



We hope that sharing our journey and how we integrated the powerful framework offered through the UN Women and Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles with the Empowerwomen.org online movement for women's economic empowerment will provide insights for your own journey to women's empowerment in your country

Much has been learned and much is yet to be accomplished as we take steps to build alliances among the many national organizations, corporations and associations that are stepping up to make women's economic equality a reality by 2030. We are particularly pleased to establish a collaborative working relationship with our new government. The recent appointment of a cabinet that reflects the rich diversity that is Canada and which is also gender balanced sets the stage for much promise. This monumental act and other accelerated efforts to cultivate a synergistic commitment to equality will require the talents and innovative entrepreneurial vigour of our entire population. Nations that provide the impetus for men and women to work together in true partnership will achieve sustainable economic growth and serve as a shining example that **E**quality truly **M**eans **B**usiness.

As 2016 is the centennial year of the women's suffragette movement in Canada, we know that the time is now to gain momentum through a National strategy to Empower Women.

We look forward to continuing our journey to advance women's economic empowerment in Canada and hope that sharing these insights can assist in similar endeavours around the world.

Together we can make gender equality a living reality for our children and our children's children.

Planet 50-50 by 2030!