



*Paramedic Women's Community*  
*Communauté des Femmes Paramédic*

Submitted by Tracy Levesque

The Paramedic Women's community hosted our first conference in Ottawa on June 7, 2014. The day kicked off with a room full of people dancing to the song "Happy" by Pharrell Williams and the atmosphere was incredible. Former Chief Sharron Greensburg got everyone on their feet, clapping and dancing in the aisles. The decor was spectacular and played off of the Paramedic Women's Community colours with table cloths in black with hot pink runners and a vase with flowers on every table. Thank-you to Paramedic Cathy Du Puy for the table arrangements they were beautiful. Cathy Ceraldi decorated and designed one of the most beautiful candy tables any of us have ever seen - all of the conference delegates were thrilled with the idea. We wanted the room to have some flare and we allowed for some creativity. The community has a holistic

approach and every idea is welcomed. Everyone who sits on this community has an equal opportunity to speak and to make a difference. Marissa McTasney President/Owner of Moxie Trades set up a booth, also in black and pink and had work boots on sale that have been designed specifically for women. Marissa and the Paramedic Women's Community continues working together on a fundraiser to help fight women's cancers.

The goal of the PWC is to see 15 per cent more women in leadership roles within 15 years to create a more balanced and empathetic work environment. The vision of the conference was to rally Paramedic men and women from across Canada to start the discussions on how we were going to achieve our goal. To our excitement, we filled the conference floor with over one hundred participants and twenty percent of

whom were men. Our philosophy is to be inclusive and to ensure that everyone feels welcome and like part of a community.

We began the day with our first guest speaker, Ottawa City Councillor Mark Taylor, who shared some wonderful words of wisdom while highlighting the fact that between his wife, his kids and the cat, he is the only male in his house. We then had welcoming words from Ottawa Paramedic Chief Tony DiMonte who supports our vision and would love to see a more diverse work force and leadership team. He shared with us a great quote from Ghandi, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." We couldn't agree more. Our panel of speakers was definitely one of the highlights of the morning. Five incredible women shared with us their life stories, with a focus on their careers. To say they were inspiring, encouraging,



courageous, determined, and intelligent would be barely breaking the tip of the iceberg. These five women accomplished so much and demonstrated such strength in the face of adversity. It was an honour to be in the same room as them and to have the opportunity to hear their stories. I wish we had more time with them, as did many of our participants. A big thank you to: Kathy Fox from Nav Canada, Susan Jones from the City of Ottawa Emergency and Protective Services, Penny Price from Regional Paramedic Program of Eastern Ontario Base Hospital, Sharon Greenwood a retired Paramedic Chief, Jennifer Bionda from Ottawa Paramedic Services and Kara Livy from Advanced Medical Solutions.

After such an inspiring morning we broke for a catered lunch and filled our candy bags with delicious sweets. The afternoon was designed to step out of our Paramedic world and hear some very encouraging words from two of our new best friends: Marissa McTasney from Moxie Trades and double lung transplant recipient Helene Campbell. Marissa and Helene shared words that left us feeling empowered and on top of the world. We were so very lucky to have had both of these celebrities participate and share their life stories with us. Ottawa

Paramedics and PWC members gave excellent presentations on compassion fatigue (which you will be able to find in this issue), the history of female paramedic pioneers in Ottawa and an in depth presentation on Muslim culture, values and traditions. The presentations were all very well done and each special guest speaker left with a beautiful pink Swarovski pen a gesture of our appreciation.


A big thank you to PWC members Suelana Taha, Valerie Jacques, Donna Duff, Lynea Finn, Deanna Schofield, Annik Allard, Caroline Mellor, Sue Noel, Shannon Leduc, Kerry Morris, Kelly Cochrane, Cathy Ramsey, Robin St. Pierre, Erin Bell, Manon Lavergne and our fantastic Paramedic students who helped make the day a success.

We believe our mission to create an environment that was supportive, positive and encouraging was successfully achieved. We had many guests from out of town who travelled hours by car and by plane to join us. It was wonderful to meet people who also believe in our mission and went out of their way to be part of this community.

So what is next for the Paramedic Women's Community? We are developing school programs and mentorship programs and inves-

tigating grant opportunities. We have just launched our "pink boot campaign" and encourage everyone to wear pink work boots for the months of October and November to help support cancer awareness. A donation to cancer will be given by the PWC with the support of Moxie Trades.

When we first came up with the idea to start a Paramedic Women's Community the very first person we approached was Darryl Wilton, the President of the Professional Paramedic Association of Ottawa. Without his guidance, support and patience we would not be writing this article today. Darryl is a very special person with great determination, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We would also like to recognize the unbelievable support we received from Ben Ripley, Ashley Murfin, Gordon "Flash" Perolli and Dwayne Gidney. Without the help from these great men our day would not have been so smooth!

Last but not least to our sponsors, the day would not have been even possible without you. Your generosity and support was very much appreciated. Thank you! 



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