To Our Minerva Community,

A year ago, the Minerva Board of Directors approved an updated strategic plan and we presented our priorities for the next three years. If 2022 was a year of planning and developing, then 2023 was a year of action!

We fulfilled our promise to “challenge bias”, and worked to expose the visible and invisible barriers women in BC are still facing, with a new research report called Unobstructed Journeys: Dismantling Barriers to Gender Equality in the Workplace.

Through an Inclusive Leadership Forum reception and youth workshops in Northern BC and Metro Vancouver, we returned to some in-person activities. We continued to form new partnerships to expand delivery of our Women’s Leadership programs and received a record number of invitations to share our work and expertise through presentations and sector events.

A Year-at-a-Glance has been colour coded to our three central, interconnected levers of change: Developing Leaders, Challenging Bias, and Activating Inclusion. With so many activities taking place during the year, we are only able to share a few stories, but we hope it gives you a sense of the impact in 2023.

As we close out the year and look forward to the work ahead in 2024, we offer a heartfelt thanks to you, the donors, sponsors, speakers, mentors, community partners and program participants who made the work reflected in these pages possible.

With gratitude,

Tina Strehlke
CEO, Minerva BC

About Minerva

Minerva BC is a Vancouver-based charity dedicated to advancing the leadership of women and girls. For over two decades we have helped women across British Columbia expand their capacities through education, mentorship, and leadership training.

We also support the business community, and wider community, as we work together to break down visible and invisible barriers in the workplace and replace them with attitudes and systems that are supportive to women’s achievement.

Our vision is a world where women and girls, in all their diversity, have equal power in decision-making spaces.

Our mission is to change the face of leadership by elevating the visibility, influence, and contribution of women.
2023 AT A GLANCE

JANUARY

Women Leading the Way™ Cohort 19 begins
28 Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members welcomed

FEBRUARY

Making Space for Youth Leadership cohort 2 launches
Rollout of our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
#BRIGHTERCONNECTIONS leadership workshops for youth in partnership with Shaw

MARCH

Michelle Pockey Leadership Awards presented to Tara-lynn Wilson, Tasha Wesley, and Cass Spence at the BIV Influential Women in Business Awards
Tina participates as a panelist at the UBC Embrace Equity event
Tina participates as a panelist at the #IWD Salesforce event
Minerva partners with DIVERSEcity on a Women’s Leadership Forum
Katie presents at TAP Network’s Create with Resiliency Emerging Leaders cohort 5 begins

APRIL

Learning to Lead™ spring programming begins
Bloom Leadership program (for immigrant women) cohort 2 begins
Minerva serves as a judge for the BC Builders Code Awards
Tina participates as a judge for the BC Women of the Year Awards

MAY

Tina participates in The Inclusion Project’s Employment Equity Partnership Roundtable
Tina facilitates a mentorship session for the Prosperity Project
Let’s Normalize Failure youth podcast is released
Communicating with Power and Presence session for youth
Minerva presents at the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Council conference

JUNE

Learning to Lead™ program in Prince George
Confidence workshop delivered to UNBC students in Prince George
YAC career development day hosted by Aritzia

JULY

Old School Tips for New Students, university advice panel hosted by Minerva’s YAC
Minerva announced as an RBC Charity Day for the Kids beneficiary

AUGUST

Two days of in-person workshops with ACCESS Canoe Leadership Program for Indigenous girls
Equitable Leadership sessions at TransLink
Financial Literacy workshop for youth with financial coach Kim Christiansen
YAC social at Bard on the Beach

SEPTEMBER

Face of Leadership™ Inclusive Leadership Forum
Forum Connects Reception
Mentor Spotlight youth event
Women Leading the Way™ cohort 20 begins
Women Leading the Way™ – in house cohorts with two corporate partners begin

OCTOBER

Emerging Leaders cohort 6 begins
All About the YAC youth podcast released
Release of the Unobstructed Journeys research report
Learning to Lead™ in-person event at Fraser Valley Secondary School
Learning to Lead™ STEM weekend
Minerva consults on developing Technical Specification on reporting and certification for the national 50-30 challenge
Youth Leadership Award is presented to Kimiya Anjam
Interview with Global BC Morning News on the Unobstructed Journeys report

NOVEMBER

Making Space for Youth Leadership Unleashing the Power Within conference
Careers in Tech Youth Mentorship session
Tina presents at the Uplift Women’s Business Summit in Victoria
Ashley delivers Learning to Set Boundaries presentation
Tina presents at the Millennium STEM BC event at BCIT
Tina recognized as BC500 by Business in Vancouver
YAC participates in a Safety and Belonging Listening Circle with the Society of Children and Youth

DECEMBER

Giving Tuesday Help Youth Lead Change campaign
YAC Holiday Party
Making Space for Youth Leadership Closing Circle
Every year, we ask ourselves two questions: How can we make our workshops and programs more accessible to youth, and how can we make the experience more meaningful? In 2023, we answered this by creating more mentorship opportunities and returning to in-person programming.

**Mentorship:**
A recent youth needs assessment conducted by our team shows an increased need for well-being support and specifically, connections to mentors who can serve as role models and enable resilience, positive educational outcomes, and career learning.

Mentorship has long been a crucial part of Minerva’s programs and in 2023 we added a number of new opportunities. These included Tech specific programming, a session devoted to fields where women continue to be underrepresented, and pairings between current program youth and program alum.

**In-person:**
While virtual programming has been invaluable for expanding our provincial reach and mentorship offerings, this year the time was right to return to some in-person programming. In addition to holding workshops in Metro Vancouver, in late spring our youth team headed to Prince George to deliver a full day of Learning to Lead™ with high school students. They also conducted a workshop for UNBC students called The Not-So-Subtle Art of Confidence. All were well received, and we are looking forward to returning to the North in 2024.

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ACTION**

Our approach is not to design programs for youth, but rather to design programs with youth. Young leaders are involved in all stages including identifying needs, designing and facilitating content, and leading hands-on projects. We also look for opportunities to grow and showcase their skills and provide insight to a broader audience on what’s important for youth leaders today.

Here are some highlights from 2023:

**Minerva AGM**

Three youth program alum were invited to share their leadership journey with our Board of Directors at the AGM. The thoughtfulness and composure of the youth we interact with is always amazing to us, but so too is their depth of curiosity and desire to grow. After taking questions from the group, they turned the tables to ask Board Members about the role empathy and vulnerability has played in their leadership, and whether they have experienced a profound change in leadership style over the years. It was a master class in authentic leadership.

**RBC Charity Day for the Kids**

In July, we were thrilled to learn we had been selected by RBC Capital Markets employees as a Charity Day for the Kids beneficiary. As part of the celebration, we were invited to attend an event in the Vancouver office to talk about our work supporting youth. Our Board Chair, Gillian Buergin, accompanied two youth who spoke about what leadership means to them and how they are developing and honing their skills. They captivated the room and skillfully responded to questions from the engaged audience.

**University Advice Panels**

The ripple effect of youth-supporting-youth is a particularly powerful part of our work. A new initiative from our Youth Advisory Council was to share their recent experiences making the transition from high school to post-secondary. The YAC created and developed a panel presentation series on various topics like Navigating University Applications, which covered managing deadlines, school selection and insights into post-secondary life. Having recently gone through the process themselves, they were able to reduce participants’ anxiety, while developing their own mentoring and coaching skills.
All our youth programs are offered at no cost to participants. We are grateful to our many funding partners who make this possible: ALACS Fund, Aritzia, BC Maritime Employee Association (BCMEA), Best Buy Canada, Eldorado Gold, Enbridge, Fluor, Hamber Foundation, RBC Foundation, SkilledTradesBC, Women and Gender Equality Canada, and many individual donors.

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

This year we welcomed our 20th cohort to our signature Women Leading the Way™ program. It has been amazing to see how this program has evolved and adapted to reach different audiences and expand our reach. In total, we delivered seven women leadership programs this year – our most ever.

The original intention of offering a leadership program was to move mid- and senior-level women towards executive positions. And while the programming and approach has been extremely successful, we also know that women need mentorship, leadership development and peer support at all levels of their careers. This led to the introduction of the Emerging Leaders program in 2021 and a partnership in 2022 to deliver a specialized program to immigrant and refugee women. In 2023, we expanded further to offer in-house cohorts at two corporations. This approach allowed women from across career levels and departments to develop their leadership skills and gain a shared understanding of what it means to be authentic leaders and advocates.

To help facilitate the expanded delivery, we also introduced a series of extensive program improvements which included newly filmed videos, updated learning content, and a move to an online workbook that is fully integrated into our learning platform.

Learning to Lead™ gave me invaluable knowledge and experience I’m so grateful to have received. Connecting with girls all around the province was something only Minerva allowed me to do, and I’m forever grateful.

2023 participant

In 2023, over 1800 people from around the province participated in our programs and events.

125 women in leadership programs
341 youth in programs
350 attendees at Minerva events
1000 attendees at Minerva presentations

BY THE NUMBERS

23 # of individual youth programs and events delivered
32 # of communities where youth participants live

REACH

In 2023, over 1800 people from around the province participated in our programs and events.
ACTIVATING INCLUSION IN ORGANIZATIONS

The week of the Face of Leadership™ Inclusive Leadership Forum is always an exciting one at Minerva. It is an opportunity to hear from organizations and individuals who are conducting research and doing progressive work in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion. In 2023, we added a new type of session, included a youth mentorship event, and hosted our first in-person event since 2019.

Two-Minute Talks

Like our Minerva community, our team loves to learn. We are always looking for new ways to make our work more interesting, relevant, and impactful. When our CEO Tina saw a two-minute talk presentation from Alex Hilleary at ChartHop, she knew we needed to include this format into our Forum programming. The result was the addition of a fast-paced session each day where experts had 120 seconds, and just one slide to share practical tips and strategies on a specific topic.

Our expectations were high, but even we were impressed by how much valuable information could be shared in such a short period of time. The topic of Pay Transparency was covered in a tactical and accessible way, How to be a More Inclusive Leader demonstrated there are so many ways to approach this critical work, and we were especially proud of the panel on Engaging Young Talent which featured a combination of senior leaders and alum from our youth programs. And yes, everyone stuck to the time limit.

Mentorship Spotlight Youth Event

We know the value of mentorship and introducing youth to a wide range of career options which they might not have previously considered, or in some cases didn’t know existed. While the workforce of the future and early career development are always popular topics at the Forum, this year, we also wanted to host an event specifically for youth.

Held as an evening virtual session, the Mentor Spotlight event gave youth attendees the opportunity to connect with a group of amazing leaders working in a range of fields where women continue to be underrepresented including engineering, trades, sports, green energy, transportation, and software development. After a panel discussion, attendees connected with mentors in breakout rooms to ask specific career questions.

Forum Connect Reception

At Minerva, we take feedback seriously. The suggestions we receive from post-Forum evaluations help shape future events. In 2022, we heard a call for the opportunity to connect in-person. Attendees expressed the desire to meet to share new learnings and discuss ideas. At the same time, we were also hearing how the virtual format spread over three half days makes learning easier and more accessible. So, when a decision needed to be made on the format for the 2023 Forum, we decided to do both by adding an in-person evening reception.

Held at the beautiful new Best Buy Headquarters, over 90 people gathered to connect with fellow Forum attendees, speakers, and the Minerva team. As part of the short program, Stephanie Redivo from TransLink and Carol Graziani from Best Buy Canada shared their reactions to our just released Unobstructed Journey report and their thoughts on how individuals and organizations can reduce invisible barriers in the workplace. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal and the conversations were lively. The end of the night left the Minerva team feeling recharged and in discussion about future in-person events.

We are grateful to the corporate sponsors who make our events possible: BC Lottery Corp (BCLC), BC Securities Commission; Best Buy Canada, Global BC, Jak’s Beer Wine Spirits; Odlum Brown Limited, PwC Canada, Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC); TransLink.
CHALLENGING BIAS

Creating Unobstructed Journeys

Throughout the spring and summer, we were hard at work on a research project looking at barriers to gender equality in the workplace so we could better understand the experiences of women leaders and identify new measures of progress.

Data collected by the Mustel Research Group revealed that in almost all categories, women in leadership report facing more barriers and experience fewer opportunities than their male counterparts. While this was aligned with other research, and what we hear from women in our networks and programs, there was also a finding that surprised us – most people in BC believe we have reached gender equality in the workplace and that opportunities to reach leadership positions are equitable across genders. Further, just over a quarter of workplaces are actively engaged in building awareness on gender equity.

The Unobstructed Journeys report was launched during the Inclusive Leadership Forum in September. Since then, we have shared the findings at conferences, through a social media campaign, and an interview on Global BC’s Morning News. We are happy to see the findings have people talking. We have heard from many how they are surprised there isn’t more awareness around workplace inequality despite women continuing to be underrepresented at all levels of leadership. Others have expressed they aren’t surprised by the findings citing how much talk about gender equity work, and the invisible nature of barriers, leads people to think we are doing better than we are. But most of all we have heard how important this report is in raising the warning bell that there is much work still to be done to reach gender equality.

In 2024, we will keep the conversation going with roundtable and panel discussions which will delve deeper into the findings and issues.

Research for the Unobstructed Journeys research report was made possible with funding from Power to Give and Pan American Silver.

REMOVING FINANCIAL BARRIERS

We recognize that many women face barriers when it comes to learning and development opportunities. In 2023 we distributed over $40,000 in bursaries and awards to help women access leadership training and post secondary education.

$20,000 in post secondary scholarships
$23,300 in leadership program bursaries

Program bursaries were made possible by a number of donors including past and present Minerva Board members, program alumni, and other generous individuals who care about education and creating equitable opportunities. For this support we are deeply grateful.
SUPPORT OUR WORK

We are grateful for the financial support we received in 2023 which allowed us to continue delivering our existing events and programs as well as launch new initiatives.

As we continue to expand our reach and impact, please consider supporting our work in 2024. Donations to Minerva are eligible for a tax receipt. **To give, please visit our secure online portal.**

For information on sponsoring an event, program or initiative, please contact Trina Prior, Director of Partnerships + Engagement, at trinap@minervabc.ca

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