



a year in review

2025





to our minerva community

Across BC, women and gender-diverse leaders continued to navigate uncertainty, shifting workplaces, and a changing economy – while stepping forward with courage, creativity, and conviction. At Minerva, we saw firsthand the strength of community-powered change in 2025. We witnessed youth becoming advocates, women stepping into new roles, and leaders building teams grounded in values and belonging.

This year, we delivered impactful programs, welcomed new voices to our team, expanded our reach, and strengthened our partnerships across sectors. As we look ahead, we remain committed to enabling pathways to leadership that are **without gender, without bias, and without limits**.

Thank you for believing in this work and for being part of the Minerva community. We wouldn't be here without you.

With gratitude

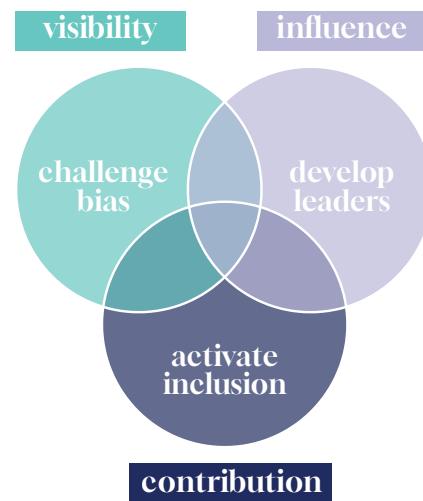
Tina Strehlke

Tina Strehlke
CEO, Minerva BC

about minerva

Minerva is a Vancouver-based charity dedicated to advancing economic and leadership opportunities for women and girls. For 26 years, we have helped women across British Columbia expand their capacities through education, mentorship, and leadership training.

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



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

year by the numbers

144

Women served

708

Youth served

1500+

Leaders through events,
presentations, workshops
and community engagement

40

Corporate Partners and
Sponsoring Employers

57

Individual Donors

74

Mentors

90%

of our leadership program participants are sponsored by their organizations. Over the years, we've welcomed women from over 200 organizations.



As an early supporter, I am delighted to see the vision we had more than 25 years ago being carried on, supported and respected by British Columbians. Seeing the business community embrace Minerva and provide ongoing support is an indication of the need, the success, the integrity of the leaders and the amazing effect this is having on women of all ages and abilities.



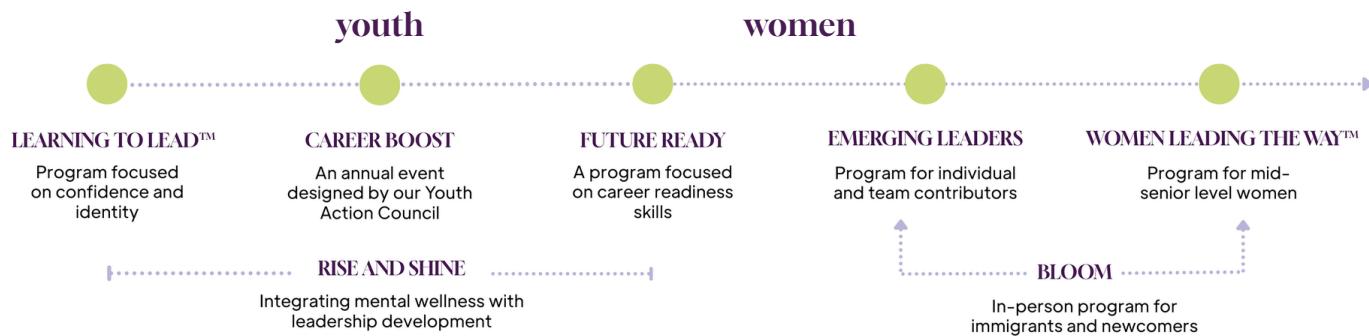
Sherry Baker

develop
leaders
influence

building skills, confidence, and community—across a lifetime

At Minerva, leadership development is not a single moment – it's a journey. Our programs are intentionally designed as a **continuum**, supporting women at key transition points as they develop skills, strengthen confidence, and step into leadership in their own ways.

From youth aged 15–25 to women in early and mid-stage careers, Minerva's leadership pathway reflects a simple belief: **when people are supported consistently, entire communities benefit.**



youth leadership: investing in the next generation

The future of our communities depends on the next generation of leaders. Young women and gender-diverse youth need supportive spaces to learn, practice, and connect – places where their voices are valued and their potential is nurtured.

“I'm now 23 and just graduated university and am working in the life sciences field. As I've been making the transition from student to working, I am still so grateful for the confidence, community, and leadership skills that I gained through Minerva's Learning to Lead™ and Youth Action Council programs. In my time at UVic I became a student mentee and then mentor for younger female students through the Women in Science peer mentorship program as well and took a lot of the things I learned from Minerva into that program.”

Youth Program Alumna





leadership in action

Learning to Lead™ alum Dilpreet led her first in-person communications workshop at this year's Career Boost. She was confident, compelling, and inspiring.

Career Boost

This past November, we welcomed **60 youth participants** to the second annual **Career Boost: Empowering the Next Generation**, a one-day event designed and delivered entirely by Minerva's Youth Action Council.

Highlights included:

- **18 mentors** from organizations including Best Buy Canada, Ocean Brands, BCMEA, Thinkific, Nicola Wealth, and more
- A keynote by **Yaa-Hemma Obiri-Yeboah**, Founder of The Y Variable
- **Youth-led workshops** on career confidence, networking, and early-career navigation
- **100%** of survey respondents said they enjoyed their experience

Career Boost reflects Minerva's youth ecosystem at work: youth supporting youth, learning from leaders, and stepping confidently toward their futures.

I think the experience was great! I learnt so much that I literally have pages full of notes, and the atmosphere was extremely positive and supportive. I enjoyed how all perspectives and stories were respected and how they portrayed leadership.

Career Boost Participant

Learning to Lead™

"You can't be what you can't see" continues to guide our flagship youth program, Learning to Lead™. Through this program, we create opportunities for young women to explore their futures, supported by mentors, facilitators, and speakers who share their successes, failures, and best career advice. Participants gain confidence through interactive workshops and activities that help them discover their authentic selves and construct a leadership identity.

In 2025:

- **100%** of participants left with a deeper knowledge of their values
- **98%** of participants plan to get more involved in their school or community
- **77%** of participants identified as BIPOC
- **28** communities served across BC

I learned the importance of taking smart risks and it gave me significant confidence to be who I am, which let me apply to be a retreat leader at my school. Fortunately, I was selected!!! I truly appreciate your encouragement and the way you create an environment which makes people feel safe and brave. I would not have applied to be a leader if I had not joined this program.

Learning to Lead™ Participant

women's leadership: growing together

As women move into early and mid-career leadership, the need for peer connection, personal reflection, and practical tools remains critical.

Women Leading the Way™

Minerva's flagship women's leadership program continues to evolve in response to participant needs. This year, we introduced **group coaching**, creating space for real-time feedback, accountability, and peer learning. Participants consistently tell us that these shared spaces are essential for translating insight into action.

Thank you to LaSalle College for hosting our hybrid Women Leading the Way™ cohort.

Emerging Leaders

Designed for early-career leaders, Emerging Leaders supports individuals as they navigate the transition from individual contributor to new manager, building confidence and foundational skills that set them up for long-term success.

Thank you to the City of Vancouver, Doctors of BC, Mothers Matter Canada and TransLink for your committed partnership and for making our Women Leading the Way and Emerging Leaders programs available to your leaders.

Bloom Leadership Program

Delivered in partnership with Mothers Matter Canada, Bloom supports skilled immigrant and newcomer women navigating barriers to career progression in Canada. The program recognizes women as leaders in their workplaces, families, and communities, while offering practical tools to strengthen confidence, leadership, and career pathways.

In 2025, we welcomed 14 women to the Bloom Leadership Program, facilitated by Shobna Kannusamy. Participants rated the program 9.6/10, with 100% inspired to make a change in their personal or professional lives and 80% expanding their professional networks.



“

Bloom helped me see that leadership isn't about being the loudest voice, it's about listening, creating space for others, and leading with kindness and honesty. It gave me confidence in who I am and how I support those around me.”

”

Bloom Program Participant

a continuum that connects

Together, Minerva's programs form a leadership pathway that supports individuals across life stages: from youth discovering their voice, to women strengthening their leadership presence and impact. This continuum reflects our commitment to developing leaders not in isolation, but in community.



ari katsiavos
Director, Payroll, Benefits
& HRIS at Zymeworks

The Power of Her Story Alumni Feature

Ari Katsiavos, Director, Payroll, Benefits & HRIS at Zymeworks, shares how the Women Leading the Way™ program helped shape her leadership journey and impact.

How did it feel to connect with women leaders in different industries and sectors?

It was incredibly eye-opening and created a real sense of community. Hearing their stories and experiences reminded me that I'm not alone in the challenges I face. There was so much strength and validation in those shared experiences.

What did being part of a community of women leaders unlock for you?

It gave me the confidence to fully embrace who I am. I've started caring less about outdated expectations like being told to "smile more," and instead, I focus on what truly matters: supporting my team and delivering results.

What's one leadership skill you've put into practice since the program?

Leaning into authenticity. I've focused on strengthening the leadership skills I already have, while also working to grow in new areas and be more intentional in how I support and uplift my team.

In three words, how would you describe the vibe of your cohort?

Transformative, Encouraging and Motivating.



Minerva's work to **Activate Inclusion** focuses on equipping individuals, organizations, and communities with the skills, relationships, and confidence needed to create more equitable leadership cultures. In 2025, this work came to life through gatherings that prioritized connection, dialogue and practical learning.

face of leadership™ inclusive leadership forum

This year's annual Inclusive Leadership Forum brought together a diverse group of business leaders, committed to advancing inclusive leadership across British Columbia. With a strong emphasis on connection, shared learning, and real-world application, the Forum created space for meaningful conversations that participants could carry back into their workplaces and communities.

By the numbers:

- **300** Forum registrants
- **71** attendees at the Forum Connect reception
- **27** speakers
- **350+** people engaged across Forum programming

One of the most impactful moments of this year's Forum was a fishbowl conversation facilitated by Dr. Aftab Erfan, Executive Director of SFU Centre for Dialogue. The session modelled inclusive leadership in action, showing how to hold difficult conversations with respect, curiosity, and care.

The fishbowl format invited participants to move in and out of dialogue, demonstrating that leadership is strengthened when multiple perspectives are welcomed. The session reinforced a key insight for today's workplaces: disagreement is not a barrier to inclusion, it's how we engage with it that matters.

As one participant shared:

“What I loved about the fishbowl was that we all felt we could be in conversation, it wasn't just listening to a few chosen speakers. This is a different way to be together and acknowledge different forms of knowledge. Let's do more of that.”

Survey results also showed that **82%** of Forum Connect respondents felt 'very connected', underscoring that psychological safety and strong relationships are essential foundations for inclusive leadership.



power of confidence: youth + mentorship in action

In partnership with **Aritzia**, we held The Power of Confidence, a day of connection and confidence-building for 20 Learning to Lead™ alumni. Hosted at Aritzia's Vancouver Support Campus, the event featured career conversations, mentorship, networking, and behind-the-scenes insights into the workplace. Participants toured the office and received professional headshots.

The day embodied Aritzia's ethos, Women to the Power of Women™, and highlighted what's possible when young leaders are met with encouragement, visibility, and opportunity.

I loved connecting with young, aspiring talent through this mentorship program – their energy and ambition were so inspiring! ... The future is looking bright!

2025 Youth Mentor



alumni in community: leadership, reimagined

Leadership deepens when stories are shared across generations. In 2025, Minerva partnered with TransLink to host Leadership and Success Redefined – an alumni gathering that brought together youth, women leaders, mentors, and allies for an evening rooted in reflection, connection, and shared learning.

Alumni panelists spoke with honesty about their leadership journeys, reminding participants that progress is rarely linear and that community plays a vital role in sustaining confidence, momentum, and growth over time. The event resonated deeply: 100% of survey respondents said they would recommend a future Minerva alumni event to a friend or colleague, underscoring the value of these spaces for continued learning and connection.



Long-time Minerva supporter **Marie Stenzel** captured the spirit of the evening:

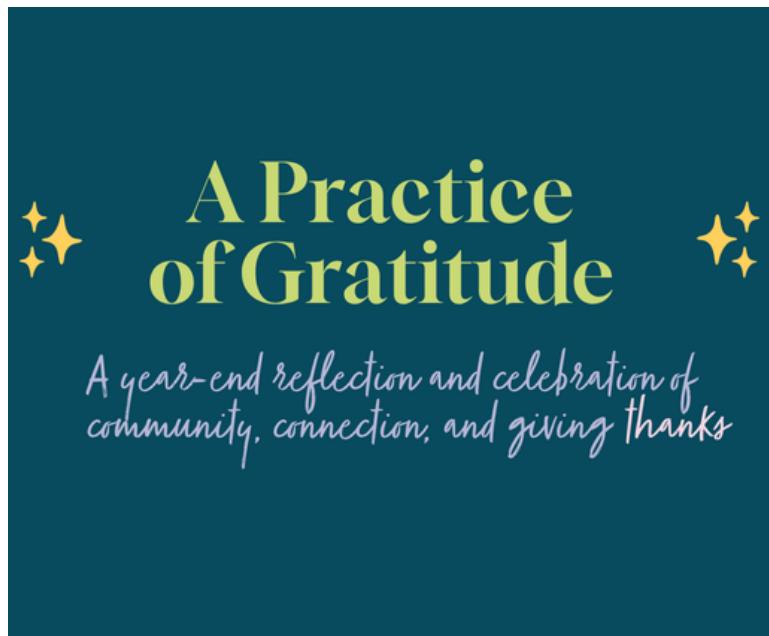
Thank you for tonight. It was filled with inspiration, meaning, and connections that spark.

Leadership and Success Redefined also marked an important step forward – laying the groundwork for a new Alumni Advisory Group that will help guide Minerva's work in 2026 and beyond, strengthening the leadership continuum across generations.

building skills for self-advocacy

In addition to large-scale events, Minerva continues to support individual leadership growth through accessible learning opportunities. During the summer, we hosted **Advocating for Yourself** webinars, supporting women to communicate their value, navigate growth conversations, and build confidence in their leadership voice.

These sessions reinforced a core belief of Minerva's Activate Inclusion work: systems change is strengthened when individuals are equipped to advocate for themselves and others.



We closed the year with **A Practice of Gratitude**, a virtual gathering that invited the Minerva community to pause, reflect, and reconnect. Voices from youth, women, alumni, and partners reminded us that leadership is a ripple, and that every investment in a woman or girl expands outward into families, workplaces, and communities. This moment of reflection reinforced that progress happens when people feel seen, supported, and connected.

start your own ripple



challenge
bias
—
visibility

Challenging bias is central to Minerva's mission. It is about naming the visible and invisible systems that limit women's leadership, and working alongside community, government, and employers to change them. In 2025, this work took shape through advocacy, public dialogue, and targeted initiatives that addressed inequity where it persists most deeply.

advocacy & systems influence

In September, Minerva BC was honoured to participate in a national gender equity roundtable in Ottawa hosted by **The Prosperity Project**, bringing together Members of Parliament, senators, senior government officials, and community leaders from across Canada. Our Board Chair, **Gillian Buergin**, represented Minerva BC, contributing to conversations on the need for sustained, targeted investment in women's leadership and youth development.

These discussions reinforced a shared reality: progress toward gender equity is not guaranteed, and without continued attention and funding, hard-won gains can stall or reverse.

Shortly after the roundtable, the federal government announced **\$660 million in new funding** to advance equality and build safer, more inclusive communities across Canada. This is a significant step that reflects the collective advocacy of organizations and leaders across the country.



“Last month, I travelled to Ottawa with a dedicated group of advocates. We had frank and honest conversations with Minister Valdez and others about the urgent need to advance equality and safety for women and 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Minister Valdez's message echoes what we told her: “We cannot build Canada strong without the full and equal participation of women and gender diverse Canadians.”

Gill Buergin, Board Chair, Minerva BC

honouring leadership & removing barriers: the Michelle Pockey Leadership Award

Challenging bias also means investing directly in women whose leadership journeys face systemic barriers. In 2025, the **Michelle Pockey Leadership Award**, presented in partnership with **Business in Vancouver**, reached a milestone year.

Thanks to the generosity of individual donors and organizational partners, Minerva distributed **the largest number of bursaries to date**:

- One **\$5,000** award
- One **\$2,500** award
- Five **\$1,000** bursaries

This year's recipients reflected the award's purpose: supporting Indigenous women, lone parents, and women pursuing education in law, justice, Indigenous, environmental, and community-focused fields.

Frankie Abel was awarded the Michelle Pockey Leadership Award and the \$5,000 bursary in 2025.

Frankie is from Gitanmaax [git-n-max] in the Hazelton region. She is currently enrolled in SFU's Indigenous Business Leadership Executive MBA program. Her future aspirations include helping the economic development within her nation while protecting the land and resources.

The awards were presented at the **BIV Influential Women in Business Awards**, with recipients recognized by two women leaders deeply connected to Michelle Pockey's legacy: Dani Bryant (Fasken) and Monique Ronning (Teck). Both spoke powerfully about Michelle's mentorship, her commitment to belonging, and her lifelong work advancing women in law, business, and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

[Learn more about the 2025 winners](#)



frankie abel

Michelle Pockey Leadership Award
winner and \$5,000 bursary recipient

examining bias & building inclusive systems

In 2025, Minerva continued to challenge bias by convening leaders, sharing evidence-based insights, and creating spaces to examine the systems that shape who advances and who is left behind.

We co-hosted Future Forward: Reimagining Inclusive Career Development with Accelerate Her Future, bringing together 40 senior leaders from 30 organizations to explore how bias shows up across the employee lifecycle, and what it takes to better engage, retain, and support Black, Indigenous, and Women of Colour in the workplace.

Minerva also engaged more than 200 engineers and geoscientists through a webinar and conference presentation, sharing findings from Unobstructed Journeys: Dismantling Barriers to Gender Equality in the Workplace. Through research and storytelling, we surfaced the lived experiences of women navigating male-majority workplaces – translating insight into reflection and action.

Beyond BC, Minerva contributed to an international Social Innovation Summit Learning Journey in Vancouver, sharing our youth-to-women leadership continuum and integrated mental wellness approach with 40 business and social impact leaders from across Canada and the U.S., including organizations such as Lululemon, Microsoft, and the Obama Foundation.

Together, these initiatives reinforced Minerva's role as a trusted voice in women's leadership – centring equity, lived experience, and practical learning to challenge bias and strengthen leadership pathways at every stage.



looking ahead

As we look toward 2026, one thing is clear: progress toward equity is not linear, and there is still work to be done.

In BC and across Canada, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership, holding fewer than one-third of senior leadership roles and only one in five executive positions. In addition, women face rising burnout alongside inconsistent leadership pathways. These patterns remind us that systemic barriers remain deeply embedded and that intentional action is still required.

In response, Minerva is entering 2026 with a focus on collective action. Our next chapter centres on strengthening economic security, preparing the next generation of leaders, and convening employers to shape more equitable systems together.

Compensation Collective

In 2026, Minerva will continue advancing the Compensation Collective, working with over 100 organizations in BC. This no-cost program is focused on enabling fair compensation practices in small and medium-sized organizations. Through a three-course learning model, participants will understand how to prepare for and conduct an intersectional gender compensation analysis. Learn more about the [Compensation Collective](#) and how you can get involved.

Future Ready

Future Ready is a new initiative to support young women and gender-diverse youth aged 17–25 as they navigate the transition from post-secondary to the labour market. Through interactive workshops, peer learning, and mentorship, participants strengthen essential career skills, improve communication, grow their network and gain clarity about their next steps. [Sign up](#) for our newsletter for more information about this program.

Lead BC

Launching in 2026, Lead BC is a year-long initiative designed to explore what women and workplaces need, and how to accelerate progress towards gender equality. Lead BC will invite honest conversations, bringing leaders together across sectors to explore what's getting in the way for women and organizational leaders. To get involved, please contact Vanessa Wright, Director of Partnerships + Development at vanessa@minervabc.ca.

DIVERSEcity x Minerva Women's Leadership Forum

DIVERSEcity and Minerva BC have teamed up to present our Women's Leadership Forum, to uplift, connect and celebrate women leaders – both emerging and established – through speakers, interactive activities, exhibitions and more. Save the date! The fourth annual event is set for March 4, 2026.

support our work

Leadership doesn't happen in isolation. It grows through connection, care, and shared commitment. Every woman and young person supported this year carries that leadership ripple forward – into workplaces, families, and communities across British Columbia.

As we look ahead, Minerva remains grounded in what has always guided us: listening deeply, responding with intention, and building leadership pathways that are accessible, relevant, and resilient. To continue this work, and to meet the moment ahead, we need a community willing to stand with us.

Your support sustains what's working, strengthens leadership pathways where gaps remain, and ensures women and gender-diverse leaders across BC have the opportunities to thrive.

Join us. Invest in women's leadership. Help shape what comes next.

Visit minervabc.ca to learn more, get involved, or make a donation.

Follow us on social media, subscribe to our newsletter, and share our work within your community.

Together, we can build a future where leadership reflects the full strength and diversity of British Columbia.



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