

A Girl's Guide to the Oil Patch; One Woman's Perspective

Astrid Elizabeth Arts¹

¹Cenovus Energy, Calgary, AB, Canada

Abstract

When I graduated from the University of Alberta in 1995 there were 20 people in my class and three women. Much has changed over the last 19 years and today female geologists are graduating in equal numbers with men. Being a female professional however, means you will typically have a different career than your male counterparts. For instance, choosing to have a family has a much greater impact on a woman's career than a man's. With proper planning and flexibility, it is possible to be a female professional with a satisfying career and family life. Returning to industry after a 5-year “maternity leave” was much easier than I anticipated due to the network I had developed through volunteering with the CSPG. The relationships forged while volunteering create colleagues and friendships inside your profession but outside your workplace. When I started volunteering with the CSPG it was not with the deliberate intention of developing a network; that, fortunately, happened by accident.

Establishing a successful career is made easier when you have a good mentor. Mentoring can come in many forms. Look at everyone (young and old) as though you can learn something from them. Mentors can be both formal and informal; if your company does not have a formal mentorship program - don't despair. With a little effort, you can meet someone in the early stages of your career with whom you “connect”. Make an effort, stay in contact with that person and reach out to them when you need it.

While navigating your career it is helpful to understand different personality types. By understanding how different people communicate, you can develop strategies to communicate with them more effectively and establish better working relationships. Email and instant messaging are fine, but if you want people to remember who you are then they need to be able to put a face to the name and meet you in real life #IRL.