

 WISE Planet
Cohort 5 | Class of 2025

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CONGRATULATIONS



“To me, WISE Planet is a space where kindness gives rise to courage, and courage becomes collective power.”

I value kindness.

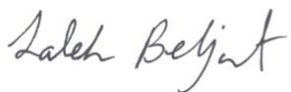
Over the past year, we have continued our shared journey as leaders, scholars, and change-makers, and human beings living and leading in a world shaped by overlapping crises. Across the globe, conflict, displacement, climate disruption, economic uncertainty, and deepening inequities have touched our lives in visible and invisible ways. Each of us carries a bundle of lived experiences with us into this space, and in these times, that bundle can feel especially heavy.

What makes me profoundly proud is that WISE Planet has remained a place where that weight is acknowledged. A place where we understand that leadership is not separate from humanity and where we have built a community where we can rely on one another to listen, to pause, and to help lighten the load when needed. This shared kindness builds trust, and from that trust grows confidence, voice, and agency. In choosing to care for one another, we have created the conditions in which each member of this community can step more fully into their power. You have used this power not to dominate, but to advocate; not to exclude, but to open doors; not to harden, but to protect what matters.

Nowhere has this been more visible than in your Leadership Equity Action Plan (LEAP) projects. In these uncertain times, your projects are acts of love for humanity. They respond to real harm with imagination, to exclusion with belonging, and to silence with voice. Each LEAP project reflects a refusal to turn away, a choice to engage, to care, and to act. Together, they demonstrate that leadership grounded in kindness can still be bold, rigorous, and transformative.

Witnessing your growth, generosity, and commitment has been a privilege. Thank you for showing what leadership can look like when it is anchored in kindness and guided by a deep love for humanity.

With love and in solidarity,



Laleh Behjat (She/her, b. 328/428 ppm), Ph.D., P.Eng., FCAE, FCSSE, FEC

WISE Planet Program Founder
Prairie Chair, NSERC Women in Science and Engineering
Professor, Sustainable Systems Engineering,
Schulich School of Engineering, University of Calgary



I value kindness, empathy, and bravery.

Cohort 5 was a cohort who felt things deeply. Measured and reflective during some of our engagements, they nonetheless revealed deep passions, commitments and connections to the things that mattered most to them while striving to grow their impact.

It was surprising, but also touching, how those present for the Systems and Cultures kick-off workshop lamented the surprise twist in an activity that meant members of their 'group' had to leave to join another group. They had been together for less than an hour, but they were so open to bonding during that time. They were really sad! In true WISE Planet fashion, the transplanted members were, of course, welcomed to, and included in their new groups - to the benefit of the final group projects.

The Change Leadership Training program is an initiative built on a vision of a future that is dependent on yet to be discovered structures and procedures. Let's all move beyond accepting or simply being comfortable with uncharted paths and roadblocks - let's celebrate them as proof that we've discovered territory worth exploring. Let's embark into the unknowns together with patience and understanding.

Cohort 5, it is our sincerest hope that regardless of what roles, companies, or life circumstances you find yourselves in in the future that you will stay flexible, stay alert, stay optimistic, stay connected and support one another, and always speak up!

Jennifer van Zelm, MSc
WISE Planet Program Manager



I value community, kindness and making a difference in the world.

Congratulations, Cohort 6! It has been an honor supporting you in your change leadership journey over the last year. Despite personal and professional challenges, you never gave up, and in fact, continued to show up, bringing your whole selves to the program. For many of your LEAP projects, the main lesson learned was to expect surprises and learn how to pivot a project effectively. It has been a challenging year with organizational culture changes and many issues competing for limited attention, so your sustained effort to craft the right message, engage the right people and build momentum for a project is admirable.

The WISE Planet team and I are incredibly proud of all your work to advocate for and advance change in your organizations. Whether it was developing mental resilience training, expanding access to undergraduate research, or building a more inclusive workplace through the creation of a diversity calendar, your work matters and it has positive impact.

As you join the community of change leaders, be confident, support each other and use your united strength to shape the future!

Stacia Thompson McCoy, PhD
WISE Planet Program Developer



Women in Science and Engineering for a Sustainable Planet

The WISE Planet program began in February 2021 and to date has enrolled 197 participants in six cohorts nominated from industry, non-profit organizations, and universities across Canada. Over the last five years, WISE Planet has been on a journey to plan, implement and communicate strategies to build a diverse and inclusive future. The program goal is to empower the voices of equity deserving groups and highlight their perspectives so that together we can build a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just society.

The one-year change leadership training covers four online learning modules, experiential learning through Leadership Equity Action Plan (LEAP) projects, and networking opportunities through the WISE Planet Network. The program is a journey that encourages creative, collaborative, agile planning skills while building up the participant's confidence to see themselves as agents of change.

OUR VISION:

Create a diverse, inclusive, equitable and just society by giving women and other historically underrepresented groups in STEM the power to make change happen.

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<https://www.youtube.com/@wiseplanet>

Bluesky:

<https://bsky.app/profile/wiseplanet.bsky.social>

ABOUT WISE PLANET

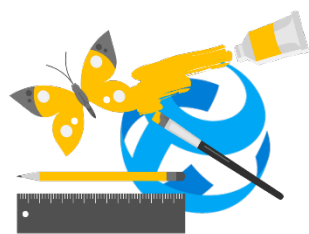


Personal Leadership

The goal of this module is to explore implicit bias and its effect on leadership, conflict management style, and leadership style. The module also explores value-based leadership and the role of ethics in the development of science and engineering. Participants learn leadership tools to support change leadership and managing change.

Culture & Systems

The goal of this module is to understand how culture defines our organizations, our actions, and our interactions. Participants also learn how systems and associated power structures are created and how systems perpetuate inequalities. The goal is to gain understanding of how to change culture and systems through strategy, collaboration, activism, and policymaking.



Designing for Disruptions

The goal of this module is to learn how to design systems that are robust and can handle disruptions. Participants learn how to design strategy, perform uncertainty analysis, and build scenarios for disruptive technologies. Participants gain an understanding of how to incorporate disruptions to improve plans through creative process and scenario planning.

Sustainability

The goal of this module is to understand that sustainability is a holistic approach in which the UN Sustainable Development Goal themes of nature, economy, wellbeing, and society are interdependent and interconnected. Participants explore sustainability topics such as Climate Action, Regenerative Design, Life Cycle Assessment, Gender Equality, and Policy Advocacy while learning how smaller, individual actions can collectively have a societal impact and how organizations can align their actions with their sustainable values.



LEAP Projects

All participants undertake a Leadership Equity Action Plan (LEAP) project as part of their WISE Planet training. These projects aim to address equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at the participant's partner organization through recruitment, retention or innovation initiatives.

WISE LEADERS

The WISE Planet network of volunteers, mentors, and allies from academia and industry are an important component of the program.



Firas Ali
FLUOR



Paula Berton
University of Calgary;
CalAgua Innovations Corp



Alicia Bjarnason
Bjarg Consulting; CCWESTT



Debbie Burke
BBA Consultants



Jennifer Chen
Emissions Reduction Alberta



Laura Curiel
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Glenn Dolphin
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Megan Gill
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Alberta Direct Connect
Consumer Association



Jill Hager
Garmin Canada



Kelly Hall
Vermillion Power
Technologies / Kelly Hall &
Associates



Jillian Johnson
Green Cat Hydrogen Ltd.



Chimene Kabriel
Worley



Leah Kirkpatrick
Shell Canada



Kelly Krahulic
FortyTwo Innovations



Veronica Madonna
Athabasca University

The contributions of WISE Leaders as advisers, mentors and sponsors of individual participants or Learning Communities of participants, and their feedback on Leadership Equity Action Plan (LEAP) projects is a valued part of the WISE Planet program.



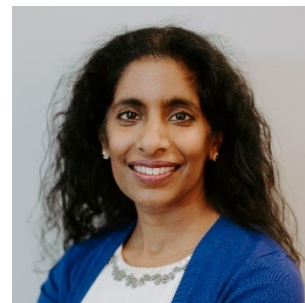
Sedigheh Mahdavi
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Jen Malzer
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Janice Miller-Young
University of Alberta



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Garmin Canada



Deirdre Norman
Imperial Oil



Kyle O'Keefe
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ENMAX Power



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University of Calgary



Sarah Stewart
ENMAX Power



Danuta Sztukowski
Coanda Research &
Development Corporation



Monika Tamber
Manulife Investment



Stacie Wilkinson
Self Employed

ADRIA LOTUS



“I joined the WISE Planet program to collaborate with a diverse network of academic and industry leaders and to apply my experience toward meaningful impact within my organization.”

I value being a STEAM educator and lifelong learner, driven by a vision of inclusive, diverse STEM education and workplaces where everyone belongs.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Adria Lotus is an Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream) in the Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering at the University of Calgary. She is a registered Professional Engineer (P.Eng.) with APEGA and brings several years of industrial experience spanning production, research, development, and innovation. Her work has included research on advanced functional nanomaterials, activated carbon for wastewater filtration, and thermal heavy oil recovery processes, resulting in two granted patents.

Originally from Bangladesh, Dr. Lotus pursued her graduate education in the United States with the support of competitive research fellowships. She earned a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Akron (Ohio, USA) and an MSc in Environmental Engineering from the University of Alabama (Alabama, USA). She holds a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering, with a minor in Petroleum Engineering, from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

Dr. Lotus completed postdoctoral research at the University of Calgary as an NSERC Postdoctoral Fellow, focusing on enhanced oil recovery processes, and previously conducted postdoctoral research at Western University on advanced functional nanomaterials. In addition to her academic role, she is strongly committed to advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) through her teaching, research, and service activities.

LINKEDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/adrialotus/>

LEAP PROJECT

Empowering Underrepresented Engineering Students Through Professional Development

My LEAP project aims to create inclusive, student-centered professional development opportunities for undergraduate and graduate engineering students, with particular attention to underrepresented groups, including international students and first-generation immigrants. The project emphasizes experiential learning, confidence-building, and the development of transferable professional skills essential for career success.

The initial phase of the project focuses on establishing **South-East Asian Women in Engineering (SEAWIE)** as an undergraduate student club at the University of Calgary. SEAWIE will foster a culturally supportive community that promotes peer support, mentorship, networking, and engagement through speaker events and skill-building workshops. Through these activities, the project aims to enhance student retention, engagement, and professional preparedness.

ADYA KARTHIKEYAN



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to learn how I could contribute to build an inclusive world for women in engineering.”

I value humanity beyond any bias

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Adya Karthikeyan is an assistant professor in the Department of Chemical and Biological engineering at the University of Ottawa since 2023. Her expertise in surface engineering, energy transport, biodegradable polymers, and process scalability was obtained through her Ph.D. from McGill University, Postdoctoral fellowship from Polytechnique Montreal and 8 years of industrial experience in nuclear power plant operation, and construction materials manufacturing research careers. She is a passionate chemical engineer who faced gender bias in early days of engineering studies and career and is determined to remove such biases to support young girls to pursue engineering.

WEBSITE

<https://uniweb.uottawa.ca/sites/SELS-LAB/Home>

LEAP PROJECT

Creating an Inclusive Atmosphere for Engineering in University

The engineering and STEM fields have long been associated with challenges related to diversity and inclusion, in terms of gender and race. As we are growing towards a diverse global setting almost everywhere, it is essential to remove biases from the student community and nurture them with inclusive mentality. Creating an inclusive atmosphere for engineering students in university settings is not only a moral imperative but also critical for innovation and the overall advancement of the profession. The project "Creating an Inclusive Atmosphere for Engineering in University" seeks to explore and implement strategies that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within engineering programs at the university level. The core objectives of the project are to identify the biases that limit the participation of underrepresented groups in engineering, such as women, minorities, and to recommend solutions that universities can implement to overcome these barriers. The long-term goals of this project focus on two components: student support systems and faculty engagement.

The creation of an inclusive atmosphere requires robust support systems for students from diverse backgrounds. This includes mentorship programs, peer support groups, and resources that cater to the unique challenges faced by underrepresented students in engineering. The project explores best practices in providing mentorship opportunities that connect students with role models and professionals who have navigated similar barriers.

Faculty members play a pivotal role in shaping the atmosphere of university programs. The project also explores the importance of faculty engagement in creating an inclusive learning environment. Faculty training in inclusive teaching practices, such as avoiding implicit bias, using equitable grading methods, and fostering an open classroom atmosphere, is essential for ensuring that students feel valued and supported. Moreover, the project examines how faculty diversity itself influences the inclusivity of the engineering environment, with an emphasis on recruitment and retention strategies for faculty members from underrepresented groups.

The first part of the project focussed on assessing the EDI climate in the graduate student cohort in the department. From the initial surveys, it was clear that the students did not feel discriminated, or biased. But, the student outlook towards minorities and diverse races needs improvement. As a method of inculcating inclusive mentality, seminar talks on implicit bias, and impact of diversity in entrepreneurship were organized. Furthermore, the project examines case studies of universities that have successfully implemented inclusive practices, providing evidence-based recommendations that can be adopted across institutions. Ultimately, this project demonstrates that creating an inclusive atmosphere for engineering in university is not just about diversifying the student body; it is about enriching the discipline as a whole, making engineering a more accessible, relevant, and impactful field for all.

ANNA PEKINASOVA



*“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to become a **better, braver leader** for a more **just and sustainable future.**”*

I value community, collaboration, and creating spaces where everyone feels empowered to contribute.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Anna Pekinasova is an Assistant Professor (Teaching) in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Calgary, where she is dedicated to creating inclusive, supportive, and empowering learning environments for the next generation of EDIA-focused engineers. She holds a PhD in Geotechnical Engineering from the University of Calgary, a Master of Engineering from UCalgary, and a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from McMaster University. Anna's commitment to EDIA is grounded in her lived experience as a refugee woman who came to Canada in 2004. This journey shaped her belief in dignity, opportunity, and belonging, and it drives her work to ensure that engineering education welcomes learners of all backgrounds. She strives to empower students, lead with empathy, and inspire others to be brave in creating a more just and sustainable world. With over 15 years of experience in engineering, modelling, and project work, Anna brings both technical expertise and social responsibility to her teaching. Outside of academia, she enjoys hiking, travelling, and caring for her rescue animals while advocating for sustainability and environmental stewardship.

WEBSITE

<https://profiles.ucalgary.ca/anna-pekinasova>

LEAP PROJECT

Making Change Summit 2025 “Agile Minds, Brave Hearts: Engineering a Just Future”

The Making Change Summit 2025 was my Wise Planet LEAP project—an EDIA-focused initiative designed to empower students, faculty, and professionals to become active contributors to a more just, resilient, and inclusive future. Hosted by the Schulich School of Engineering at the University of Calgary, the two-day Summit brought together diverse voices across engineering, education, law, and public policy to catalyze meaningful conversations and build tangible skills for leading change. Rooted in the theme “**Agile Minds, Brave Hearts: Engineering a Just Future**,” the Summit invited participants to reflect on the societal responsibilities of engineers and to cultivate the courage, adaptability, and humanity required to shape a better future.

The program was intentionally designed to integrate multiple forms of knowledge and experience. The opening day featured a welcome by **Deanna Burgart**, grounding the event in Indigenous knowledges and perspectives on responsible engineering. This was followed by introductory remarks from the Summit Chair (**myself**), who situated the Summit within a broader Wise Planet vision of ethical leadership and community empowerment. A keynote by **Gayathri Shukla** encouraged participants to explore the role of story, identity, and shared humanity in driving collective action. Throughout the day, attendees engaged with a series of talks and workshops that centered inclusivity, intergenerational learning, and diverse perspectives. **Dr. Jocelyn Hayley and Milana Grozic** shared their experiences navigating academic pathways across generations, offering a dialogue on mentorship, perseverance, and building supportive scholarly communities. A workshop by **Dr. Emily Marasco and Dr. Laleh Behjat** introduced divergent and creative thinking strategies, encouraging participants to adopt broad, multidisciplinary approaches to innovation. Afternoon sessions highlighted **EDIA in engineering education and practice** (Dr. Ryley Beddoe), followed by **accessibility and inclusive teaching** (Dr. Glenn Dolphin). The first day closed with a talk by **Caroline O’Driscoll**, a lawyer specializing in government accountability, underscoring the importance of transparency, civic engagement, and ethical responsibility in professional practice. A workforce-focused panel moderated by **Dr. Leanne Dawson** provided space for dialogue across industry and academia, and the evening networking reception enabled attendees to build meaningful connections that support future collaboration.

The second day centered on a half-day, immersive foresight experience entitled “**Making Change Happen: Scenarios and Toolkits**.” This highly interactive session introduced participants to a Canadian strategic foresight model that outlines four distinct pathways of societal change—bold action, caution, crisis, and inaction. Through guided group activities, attendees analyzed complex systems, explored the forces shaping social and technological futures, and identified actionable strategies for navigating uncertainty. Participants left with future-oriented tools and a clearer understanding of how to exercise agency within evolving social, environmental, and professional landscapes.

As part of the Wise Planet LEAP program, the Making Change Summit serves not only as a standalone event but also as a catalyst for long-term cultural transformation within the Schulich School of Engineering. By centering storytelling, inclusion, interdisciplinary learning, and systems thinking, the Summit reinforces the idea that engineering leadership extends far beyond technical problem-solving. It requires empathy, collaboration, integrity, and a commitment to community wellbeing. This project establishes a foundation for deeper engagement in the coming years—through follow-up initiatives, mentorship networks, collaborative workshops, and student-led changemaking activities. Through this Summit, participants are equipped with the tools, confidence, and mindset needed to contribute to meaningful, sustainable transformation across their academic, professional, and civic communities.

ANU ROHILLA



“I joined WISE Planet to become a stronger advocate for EDI and to ensure that motherhood and career growth can coexist.”

I value collaboration and diverse perspectives that drive meaningful change.

BIOGRAPHY

I am Anu Rohilla, a Digital Marketing Advisor at ATCO. I love bringing structure and creativity together to build campaigns that connect meaningfully with people. Outside of work, I find joy in organizing. It is genuinely therapeutic for me and helps me stay grounded.

I moved to Calgary a few years ago and absolutely fell in love with the city. The mountains, the people, and the energy here make it feel like home. I am also passionate about inclusive leadership and joined the WISE Planet Leadership program to grow as an advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.

LINKEDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/anu-rohilla>

LEAP PROJECT

Leading with Empathy – Supporting Women Through Parenthood and Career

As part of the WISE Planet Leadership course, I undertook a project focused on the maternity leave experience of women in the workplace, with a particular emphasis on the emotional and psychological challenges they face before, during, and after their leave. The goal was to explore how organizations can better support women through this significant life transition, and to identify actionable steps that promote equity, inclusion, and empathy in workplace culture.

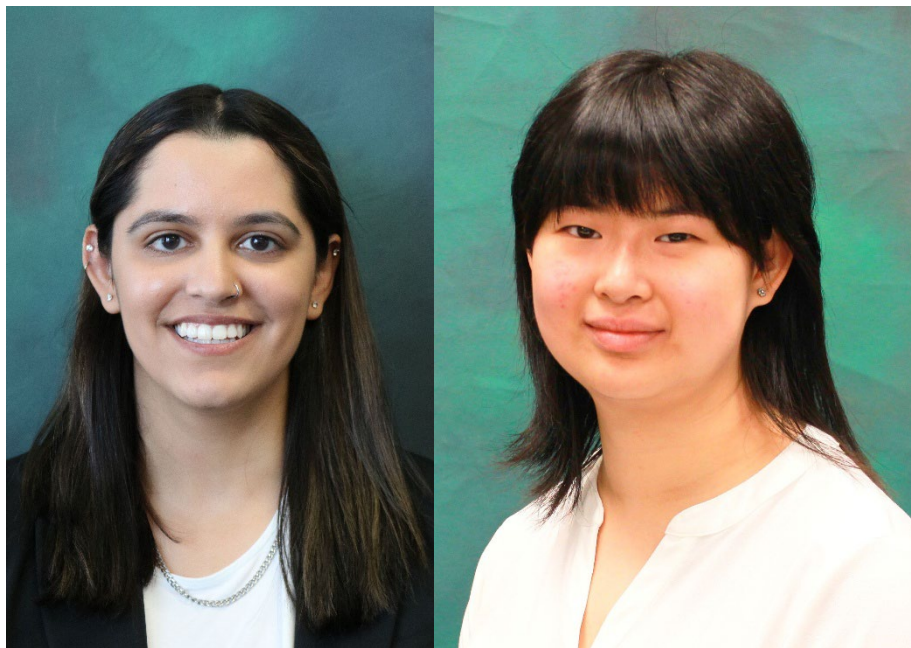
To ground the project in real experiences, I conducted interviews with women at ATCO who had recently gone through maternity leave. These conversations revealed a consistent theme: while logistical support such as wellness rooms and flexible work arrangements were appreciated, many women experienced emotional stress stemming from uncertainty, lack of transitional guidance, and the fear of professional disconnect. The return to work often felt overwhelming, with limited visibility into what had changed during their absence and minimal structured support to reintegrate.

ATCO has already implemented several commendable initiatives that reflect its commitment to employee well-being. These include secure wellness rooms and milk storage facilities, accessible parking and work-from-home options during late pregnancy, and staged re-entry options upon return. These offerings demonstrate that ATCO genuinely cares about its people and is invested in creating a supportive environment.

Building on these strengths, I proposed a set of new initiatives aimed at enhancing the emotional and transitional support for women navigating maternity leave. These include empathetic leadership training for managers to better understand and respond to the emotional needs of their team members, the appointment of a dedicated maternity leave coordinator within HR to provide personalized guidance, and the development of a reboarding toolkit. This toolkit would serve both managers and returning employees by documenting key updates, process changes, and team shifts that occurred during the leave period, ensuring a smoother and more informed reintegration.

The project was well-received by HR, and discussions are underway to explore the feasibility of implementing these initiatives. Through this work, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate workplace culture, one where maternity leave is not seen as a disruption, but as a natural and supported part of an employee's journey.

ASHIMA VERMA & LINA LEM



“We joined WISE Planet because we want to drive systemic change and create equitable opportunities in science and engineering.”

We value equal opportunities for growth, leadership, and recognition.

BIOGRAPHY

Ashima Verma graduated from the University of Alberta in 2023 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Chemical Engineering. As part of the co-op program, she gained valuable industry experience through work terms at Mercer Peace River Pulp in Peace River, Alberta, where she served as a Technical Co-op Student, and at Corrosion Service Company Limited in Acheson, Alberta, where she worked as a Corrosion Engineering Co-op. Following her graduation in 2023, Ashima joined Spartan Controls in Edmonton, Alberta, where she currently works as an Application Specialist in the Protection Business Unit.

Lina Lem moved from Calgary, Alberta to Vancouver in 2017 to pursue her studies at the University of British Columbia. During her degree, she participated in the co-op program, gaining experience as a Junior Policy Analyst with Environment and Climate Change Canada in the New Substances Division, and as an Engineering Co-op Student at ESD Simulation Training. Lina graduated in Spring 2022 with a Bachelor of Chemical and Biological Engineering with Distinction. Shortly after, she joined Spartan Controls as an Application Specialist in the Valves and Actuation group. In this role, she primarily supports BC Oil and Gas customers—focusing on refineries and gas utilities—by providing expertise in maintenance, repair, and operations.

LEAP PROJECT

Evaluating the Effectiveness of EDI Initiatives at Spartan Controls

Over the past five years, our organization has taken meaningful steps to promote diversity and inclusion in technical sales, with a particular focus on recruiting and retaining women in these roles. This year, our LEAP project aimed to evaluate the progress of previous WISE Planet Cohorts and identify remaining gaps in retention and career advancement for women.

To achieve this, we combined qualitative and quantitative data collection to understand whether women are moving into leadership and outside sales roles and how they perceive their career development opportunities. We gathered demographic data by role type and partnered with HR to design a benchmarking survey on attitudes toward career progression and the support employees receive to achieve their goals. The survey will help uncover themes specific to women's experiences and inform actionable insights and a roadmap for creating a more inclusive environment that empowers women in technical fields.

Looking ahead, the survey will be repeated every two years to track trends and ensure ongoing support for these initiatives. Our next step is to transition ownership of the survey to the Spartan Supporting Women (SSW) network, building on the foundation established through this year's work. We will continue collaborating with SSW after completing the WISE Planet Program to sustain momentum and drive meaningful change.

BRONWYN CHORLTON



“I joined WISE Planet because I want to be a part of this network of leaders and change-makers.”

I value lifting other people up and supporting creative environments where students, colleagues, and friends can thrive.

BIOGRAPHY

I am an Assistant Professor (Teaching) in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Calgary. I obtained an undergraduate degree in Architecture Conservation and Sustainability Engineering at Carleton University, in Ottawa, Ontario, and my Ph.D. in structural fire engineering at York University in Toronto, Ontario. The common thread throughout my career journey so far has been focusing on initiatives that help others – with my undergraduate degree focusing on how we can make buildings more sustainable from environmental and social standpoints, and my graduate work focusing on how buildings and communities can be more fire-safe. Now, working directly teaching students, I get to assist these bright minds and support them every day.

LINKEDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/bronwyn-chorlton>

LEAP PROJECT

Understanding the Hidden Curriculum in Work-Integrated Learning

Some of my past work has looked at the experiences of engineering students, and engineers in the workplace. One of the transitions that I noticed many people struggled with was the transition from their education to work. I want to understand which technical, social, and cultural aspects of the workplace that engineering students could be better prepared for – the hidden curriculum. In addition, I want to understand whether any particular groups are disproportionately affected by the hidden curriculum, and what we, as educators, can do to better prepare students.

Over the past year, a significant amount of work has been done for this project – including mobilizing a team that includes engineering professors as well as researchers from other disciplines, such as psychology. In addition, I have spoken and worked with students who have gone through the internship experience, as well as the engineering career centre. From this, I was able to survey students returning from internship to understand their experiences, with a very good response rate.

I look forward to the next steps of this project. I am hopeful that analysis of these results will point to actionable changes, which could include recommendations for training prior to internship, elements that can be integrated across the engineering curriculum, or the development of a community of practice of students both leaving for- and returning from- internship.

ELLEN BUCKIE



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to expand my leadership skills through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to meet others who are committed to the same values.”

I value fostering an inclusive environment where we can embrace diverse experience and perspectives.

BIOGRAPHY

Ellen Buckie is a Senior Analyst with ATCO’s Sustainability & ESG Disclosure team and has been with the company since 2017. In her role, she works closely with subject matter experts across the company to understand operational performance and how it relates to sustainable decision making. In previous roles at ATCO, she has focused on emissions compliance programs and environmental mitigation for natural gas utilities. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (Environmental Option) from the University of Alberta.

Ellen was born and raised in Edmonton and now lives in Calgary with her husband. In her spare time, she coaches cross country skiing, sings in a choir, and spends time at the ceramics studio.

LEAP PROJECT

Scope 3 Reporting Expansion

As a part of my company's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship and corporate sustainability, my project aims to expand and refine scope 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reporting by expanding beyond the current scope 3 reporting inventory. Scope 3 emissions (generated indirectly through the value chain) represent the largest and most complex portion of my company's carbon footprint. By broadening the Scope 3 coverage, we can enhance transparency, understand our operations from a different perspective, and identify actionable opportunities for emissions reductions.

This project is primarily focused on the theme of sustainability, but also looks more broadly at themes related to diversity and inclusion. Expanding to new Scope 3 categories invites new stakeholder input, opening up the possibility for sustainable decisions to reflect a wide range of experiences through intentional stakeholder engagement. The input required from diverse departments offers an opportunity for cross-functional collaboration, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue that can elevate voices which might be underrepresented in other forums. Due to the international nature of ATCO's operations, recognizing diverse practices and contexts in operations is necessary to ensure that emissions estimates are locally accurate and culturally relevant.

During the year, regulatory pauses meant that the public reporting timeline driving this project was delayed. This offered an opportunity to slow down the process and focus on building a strong foundation to the program. Although initially disheartening, it allowed me to engage in meaningful conversations with subject matter experts from across the company without the pressure of an immediate deadline. This initial stakeholder engagement should lead to a final outcome that is even more robust and reflective of the real day-to-day operations of the company. I am encouraged that taking the time to gather higher quality information will lead to better decision making in the future.

FATEMEH MAHMOUDI



“I joined WISE Planet because I know how overwhelming it can feel to be new, and I just wanted to learn how to make a difference and how to make the system more supportive for others.”

I value curiosity, critical thinking, and meaningful change.

BIOGRAPHY

My academic journey began in Iran, within an educational system very different from the one I work in today. I was fortunate to learn from supervisors who trusted me, encouraged independence, and gave me the freedom to develop my own ideas. Those early experiences shaped how I think about learning, as a process rooted in curiosity, reflection, and asking good questions.

Immigrating to Canada later made me deeply aware of how essential a sense of belonging is. I carried that awareness with me while completing my PhD in Statistics in Calgary, and again when I started my first faculty position. Beginning a new academic role felt like another form of immigration, entering a culture where much is assumed knowledge and learning happens quietly in the background.

Today, I teach statistics at Mount Royal University. Alongside my work with complex health and survival data, I care deeply about how students experience learning, how assessments reflect understanding, how classrooms feel inclusive, and how instructors continue to learn alongside their students. I am grateful for the opportunity to teach, to connect, and to keep refining my practice.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

I Wish I Knew: An Onboarding Resource for New Instructors with EDI in Mind

Starting a new academic position can be both exciting and overwhelming. For many new instructors, particularly those who are early in their careers, new to an institution, or new to Canadian academia, essential knowledge about teaching policies, student accommodations, and available supports is often fragmented, informal, or assumed. While equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization are stated priorities at many institutions, new instructors are rarely provided with practical guidance on how to implement these principles in everyday teaching.

This LEAP project responds to that gap by developing a concise and accessible onboarding resource designed specifically for new instructors at Mount Royal University. The resource will provide clear guidance on common teaching responsibilities such as exam deferrals, illness policies, and working with accessibility services while also including concrete examples of inclusive and Indigenous informed teaching practices. Rather than positioning equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization as abstract ideals, the project focuses on how these values can be meaningfully embedded into routine classroom decisions from lecture examples to assessment design.

Rooted in lived experience as both an immigrant and a newcomer to academia, this project recognizes that starting a new position often involves navigating unspoken norms and institutional cultures. For some instructors, asking questions and seeking clarification feels straightforward, but for others it can be difficult to take up space and ask for support in environments where much is assumed knowledge. By making expectations explicit and centralizing resources, this project aims to reduce barriers, increase confidence, and foster a sense of belonging from the very first course an instructor teaches.

The onboarding guide will be flexible, digitally accessible, and updated over time, and it will be adaptable to different instructional contexts. Development will involve consultation with institutional partners including the Academic Development Centre, the EDI Office, and Indigenous Initiatives to ensure accuracy, cultural care, and alignment with institutional values. The resource will be piloted with new and early career instructors, and feedback will be used to refine both content and format.

In the long term, this project aims to contribute to a more supportive and inclusive teaching culture at Mount Royal University by ensuring instructors begin their roles with clarity, confidence, and practical tools. By supporting instructors early in their journeys, the project ultimately seeks to enhance student learning experiences and promote more equitable and culturally responsive classrooms across the institution and beyond.

GITA GHIASI



“I joined WISE Planet because it offers a unique blend of networking, mentorship, leadership, and professional development opportunities that are crucial for early career researchers (ECRs) like myself.”

I value, and am committed to, the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across all my scientific and non-scientific activities.

BIOGRAPHY

Gita Ghiasi is an assistant professor at the School of Engineering Design and Teaching Innovation (SEDTI) at the University of Ottawa. She is also an affiliate assistant professor at the Center for Engineering in Society at the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science, Concordia University. Her research interests are R&D mapping, EDI in research and innovation, gender analysis, international development, and science and technology policy. Her research focuses on the potent effects that technologies can have, and may in future have, on society and introduces policy strategies to orient technologies toward equity and equality outcomes. More specifically, her research applies metadata analyses to publications, patents, companies and industries to address the societal implications of science and technology and explores whether innovative and technological developments are inclusive for women, comply with the gendered innovations approach, and contribute to the success of the UN’s sustainable development goals (SDGs). Gita Ghiasi’s research has been of particular interest to the scientific community and has been featured in several media outlets, including Nature, Science, Wired, and Gadette.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

ENGendeR EQuality

The LEAP project aims to create a gender-responsive research evaluation hub, with visual dashboards, for engineering faculties across Canada. This initiative focuses on three main aspects:

1. Conducting a bibliometric analysis of knowledge production at the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Ottawa.
2. Examining the extent of gender disparities in scientific production and impact, as well as in co-authorship collaborations, authorship, and citation practices (including open access, participatory research, and citizen science).
3. Assessing how well engineering research aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality.

Based on these metrics, I introduced Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track improvements or declines over time, related to the 30 by 30 goals.

During my year with WISE Planet and with the support of my students, four different dashboards were created. The next steps are finding the best ways and locations to promote and share the dashboards.

Ideally, based on the data, gender-responsive policy implications at the university or faculty level to foster meaningful change can be proposed.

The primary goal of this work is to inform uOttawa and other engineering faculties about any disparities, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding hiring practices, tenure applications, award nominations, and chair selections. Furthermore, we aim to create a comprehensive map of Canadian engineering departments, allowing for comparisons between those performing better and worse in these areas.

H. JITHAMALA CALDERA



“I joined WISE Planet because it strengthens my growth as a STEM leader, enabling me to drive systemic change through innovative, evidence-informed solutions that serve people and communities.”

I value using evidence and data to transform complex ideas into practical solutions that create positive impact.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a researcher and data scientist working at the intersection of disaster risk, climate resilience, and equitable decision-making. I hold a BSc in Mathematics and Statistics with Computer Science and began my career as a quantitative analyst before moving to Calgary. While raising my first child, I volunteered in disaster research, an experience that became a turning point in my academic and professional journey.

I later completed both my MSc and PhD in Civil Engineering at the University of Calgary, drawing on interdisciplinary training in data science, transportation engineering, and project management to focus on disaster studies. My work is deeply shaped by lived experience, including surviving the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka and witnessing the 2013 Alberta floods, which revealed how disaster impacts are often underestimated or communicated too late.

I am the developer of the Dis-Utility-Based Universal Disaster Severity Classification System (DUDSCS), a framework designed to translate complex disaster impacts into a clear, decision-ready language. Through the LEAP program, I am advancing this work toward real-world application to support more equitable and informed disaster response.

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LEAP PROJECT

Empowering Equitable Disaster Response: Advancing the Dis-Utility Based Universal Disaster Severity Classification System (DUDSCS)

Disasters do not just need to be detected—they need to be understood. Climate change, urban growth, and aging infrastructure are increasing the frequency and impact of disasters worldwide. While progress has been made in climate-resilient design, hazard monitoring, and emergency planning, a critical gap remains: there is no consistent, scientifically grounded, and decision-ready way to classify disaster severity across different hazard types that clearly informs emergency response, resilience planning, and climate adaptation investment.

Each year, disasters—from wildfires and floods to pandemics—affect millions of people. Yet disaster severity is still measured and communicated in fragmented, inconsistent, and often inequitable ways. Many existing approaches rely on single indicators, such as fatalities or economic loss, overlooking broader human and social impacts that shape recovery and long-term resilience. This fragmentation limits meaningful comparison across events, delays response and policy decisions, produces policies that fail to reflect the lived realities of affected communities, and can lead to uneven resource allocation—particularly disadvantaging Indigenous and marginalized populations.

My LEAP project, Empowering Equitable Disaster Response, advances the Dis-Utility-Based Universal Disaster Severity Classification System (DUDSCS) as a solution to this challenge. The motivation for this work is deeply personal: I survived the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka and witnessed the 2013 Alberta floods—events where the true severity of impacts was underestimated and not clearly communicated until it was too late. The COVID-19 pandemic later reinforced this lesson globally—disasters are often underestimated until their consequences become unavoidable.

DUDSCS is a scientifically validated, multi-dimensional disaster severity framework that integrates human, social, and economic impacts into a standardized 0–10 scale with clear qualitative descriptions. This enables consistent severity communication across hazards and stakeholders. The system incorporates five core impact factors: fatalities, injuries, homelessness, affected population, and economic damage. Model weights were estimated using a global public perception dataset of over 11,000 responses across multiple regions. Historical disaster data from more than 16,000 events (1960–2022) were normalized for population growth and inflation and modeled probabilistically to define severity thresholds and uncertainty ranges.

The outcome is an intuitive, color-coded severity language that translates complex data into information easily understood by decision-makers, responders, and the public. By aligning technical rigor with human perception, DUDSCS bridges the gap between data, communication, and action.

Through the LEAP program, I have focused on moving DUDSCS from research toward real-world readiness by strengthening interdisciplinary partnerships, developing pilot pathways, and building leadership capacity in knowledge mobilization and inclusive design. Looking ahead, next steps include pilot implementation, development of accessible training and visualization tools, and expanded collaboration with local and Indigenous communities, policymakers, and international organizations. I welcome collaboration with practitioners, researchers, and institutions interested in advancing equitable, data-informed approaches to disaster severity communication and application.

By improving how disaster severity is understood and communicated, DUDSCS aims to support faster, fairer, and more inclusive decisions—helping ensure that no community is left unheard when disaster strikes.

HELOISE DAVIDS



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to collaborate with like-minded professionals who are committed to advancing sustainability, equity, and innovation. The program offered an opportunity to deepen my understanding of how complex organizations function, to learn from diverse perspectives, and to help shape practical solutions that drive measurable impact, not just for today, but for the future of our industry.”

I value Building for the Future. I am motivated by the opportunity to shape not just immediate results, but long-term culture, resilience, and the strategic direction of my organization and profession.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a Procurement Specialist at ATCO Gas in Calgary, Alberta, with expertise in strategic procurement planning, contract negotiation and execution, and supplier management. My experience includes leading high-value sourcing initiatives, negotiating multi-million-dollar agreements, and optimizing EPCM utilization to support business objectives and risk mitigation. I have developed and implemented contract governance frameworks, managed RFQs and RFPs for major infrastructure projects, and fostered long-term supplier partnerships to drive performance and cost savings.

I have a strong interest in procurement innovation, contract law, and building strategies that maximize value, mitigate risk, and power business growth. My approach emphasizes operational efficiency, compliance, and continuous improvement, supporting enterprise success in a dynamic industry.

LEAP PROJECT

Advancing Sustainable Procurement, A Collaborative and Pragmatic Approach

This year, I undertook a sustainable procurement initiative informed by my participation in the WISE Planet program, which encouraged a comprehensive and strategic perspective on supply chain management. My objective was to develop a framework that embeds sustainability, diversity, and ethical practices throughout the procurement process, with a focus on measurable outcomes and continuous improvement.

I designed the framework to position procurement as a catalyst for environmental, social, and economic value creation. My initial ambitions included the establishment of policies, clear key performance indicators (KPIs), structured supplier engagement, and the integration of analytics. However, as the initiative progressed, I recognized that effective implementation required a nuanced understanding of the organization's operational realities.

Collaboration with senior management proved essential, not only for endorsement, but for gaining critical insights into the organization's broader business functions and the inherent limitations in implementing sustainability principles. Through structured dialogue and joint workshops, I identified several key themes:

- The interconnectedness of procurement with operations, finance, and regulatory compliance.
- The challenges presented by cost pressures, legacy systems, and competing organizational priorities.
- The necessity of balancing long-term sustainability objectives with immediate operational requirements and market constraints.

Senior management provided candid feedback regarding the feasibility of integrating sustainability principles, highlighting areas where seamless adoption was possible and others where phased or adaptive approaches would be required. This input was instrumental in ensuring the framework was both ambitious and grounded in operational practicality. Informed by these insights, I evolved the framework to include:

- **Policy Consideration:** Policies tailored to reflect operational realities, phased for gradual adoption, and aligned with evolving regulatory requirements.
- **Measurement Framework:** KPIs prioritized for reliability and relevance, focusing on environmental impact, supplier responsibility, cost efficiency, and compliance.
- **Supplier Engagement:** Strategies adjusted for varying levels of ESG maturity, supported by detailed scorecards, contract clauses, and transparent reporting mechanisms.
- **Education:** Implement targeted training and development programs to ensure procurement professionals are equipped to identify, evaluate, and act on sustainability opportunities and constraints. Empowering teams to drive greater innovation, recognize emerging opportunities, and integrate sustainable practices into procurement decisions.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Embedded feedback loops to facilitate ongoing learning and adaptation.

The program underscored the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and reflective practice. It reinforced that sustainable procurement is not a static achievement but an ongoing process, one that benefits from diverse perspectives, honest feedback, and a willingness to adjust strategies as new challenges and opportunities arise.

I believe this collaborative and adaptive approach is essential for building a resilient and future-ready procurement function. The framework I developed is designed to evolve alongside the organization, supporting regulatory compliance, cost optimization, and stakeholder trust as the business environment continues to change.

JAMIE TSUI



“I joined WISE Planet to connect with women from similar industry and academia who share similar interests, and to exchange our perspectives in a supportive and inclusive environment.”

I value trust, transparency, and inclusive growth – transforming shared vision into empowered action.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a Business Planning Project Manager at ENMAX Power, with a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Alberta. Over the past 10 years, I have gained diverse experience through a variety of positions including roles in Transmission and Distribution Asset Management and Project Delivery. I am passionate about building strong relationships and thrive in collaborative, team-oriented environments. As an aspiring leader, my goal is to help shape a workplace that inspires future generations. I believe it is possible to achieve both professional success and personal fulfillment – and I want to empower others to believe the same, without feeling they must sacrifice either. Outside of work, I enjoy travelling, staying active, and keeping up with my two energetic kids.

LEAP PROJECT

Unconscious Bias Training Initiative

My LEAP project focuses on delivering an Unconscious Bias Training initiative within my team as a pilot initiative. The goal is to raise awareness of unconscious biases that can influence decision-making and workplace interactions, and to promote a culture of inclusion and fairness across team practices.

Objectives:

- Educate team members on the concept of unconscious bias and its impact on decision making.
- Highlight practical examples relevant to our work environment to illustrate how bias can affect processes and outcomes
- Provide practical strategies for recognizing and mitigating bias in everyday processes.
- Collect feedback to refine content and measure impact before scaling across the organization.

By starting with a targeted group, this initiative aims to create a foundation for broader adoption, ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion principles are embedded into operational practices.

JASMINE BEARSS



“I joined WISE Planet to strengthen my confidence and lead with purpose, inspiring others the way I’ve been inspired in my own career.”

I value curiosity, growth and representation.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a site-based Production Engineer at Suncor Energy with over six years of experience in Alberta’s Oil and Gas industry. My current role follows a week-on, week-off schedule that offers a fantastic work–life balance. During my on-site weeks in Northern Alberta, I’m immersed in a dynamic, fast-paced, and fulfilling work environment where I have the opportunity to apply strategic problem-solving and collaborate with a diverse group of professionals. On my weeks off, you can usually find me at the gym, in the rink playing ringette, enjoying great food, traveling, or most importantly, spending quality time with friends and family.

My passion for engineering and the empowerment of women began at a young age while playing a predominantly female sport and loving all things math and science. A truly transformative experience as a co-op student at Suncor further deepened my interest and broadened my perspective. I am committed to continuing to grow and develop within this space, contributing meaningfully to both the engineering field and the advancement of women within it.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Female Engineering Discovery (FED) Program

There is an opportunity across Canada to attract more young women into the field of engineering. In 2020, approximately 25% of undergraduate engineering students identified as female. However, retention rates for those students are high, indicating that while recruitment remains a challenge, women who enter engineering programs are successful in completing their studies. Low enrollment therefore contributes directly to fewer women entering the engineering workforce.

A pilot outreach initiative was developed in 2025 to encourage young women to explore engineering and other STEM-related careers. The initiative supports Engineers Canada's 30 by 30 goal to increase the proportion of newly licensed female engineers to 30% by 2030. The pilot included a four-week experiential learning opportunity designed to expose participants to multiple engineering disciplines and potential career pathways. Participants rotated through several engineering groups to gain a broad understanding of the field.

Eligible participants were high school students aged 15–17 who identify as female.

In addition, the initiative included:

- Mentorship from early-career engineers and post-secondary students
- Informal discussions with senior leaders
- Professional development sessions focused on interview skills and résumé building
- Exposure to student project presentations to highlight real-world engineering work

Early feedback from the pilot indicated a positive experience for both participants and professionals involved, demonstrating the value of early exposure initiatives in supporting diversity within engineering.

JENNIFER OGUMBOR-LARBI



“I joined WISE Planet because I reached a point where I knew growth could not come solely from experience or responsibility. I had learned a great deal by doing, by observing and by figuring things out on my own. But I realized that kind of learning has limits. I wanted to learn in conversation with others. I wanted to be challenged by women who think differently, who ask harder questions and who are equally committed to evolving with intention. I joined WISE Planet to expand my perspective, to build meaningful connections and to continue growing in ways that are thoughtful, grounded and deliberate.”

I value curiosity, discernment and leadership that remains grounded in people, even as systems and technology become more complex. I value spaces where questioning is encouraged and growth is treated as a practice, not a milestone.

BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Ogumbor-Larbi is a lifelong learner with over a decade of professional experience shaped by complexity, responsibility and change. Throughout her career, she has worked in environments where technology and systems increasingly influence outcomes, often at a pace that challenges human judgment and understanding.

Over time, Jennifer has become less focused on individual solutions and grown deeply interested in how leaders make decisions when technology moves faster than human understanding. She is known for bringing clarity to complex situations, asking questions that surface unseen risk and her willingness to challenge assumptions with care. She brings attention to context, consequence and the realities that can be obscured as systems scale.

Through WISE Planet, Jennifer has invested in broadening her worldview and refining her sense of purpose. The program has offered her not just connection, but a mirror: a way to better understand her own values, leadership style and the kind of impact she wants to have in the world.

LEAP PROJECT

Human-Centered Knowledge Stewardship

My LEAP, *Human-Centered Knowledge Stewardship*, emerged from working inside complex, technology-driven environments where decisions increasingly live in systems rather than in people. As organizations scale digital solutions, operating models and interconnected platforms, the way decisions are designed, governed and translated into action matters as much as the technology itself.

What I began to notice is that as systems grow more abstract, the knowledge closest to the work often becomes harder to access and the people most affected by decisions are less likely to shape them.

This work led me to focus on how technical decisions gain authority and scale, and how human context is either preserved or lost along the way. In many STEM environments, assumptions are embedded into processes, tools and rules that appear neutral, yet consistently privilege certain forms of visibility, availability and familiarity. These patterns are rarely intentional, but they shape outcomes predictably, particularly when change is rapid and accountability is diffuse.

Through my LEAP, I explored the role of stewardship in technical leadership. Stewardship, in this sense, is the responsibility to ensure that knowledge does not concentrate with a few individuals, that institutional memory is not erased by transition, and that decision-making remains accountable to operational reality as systems evolve. This is where disciplines like business analysis play a critical role, not as support functions, but as enterprise capabilities that connect strategy, technology, and lived experience.

WISE Planet gave me the space to deepen this thinking alongside women who operate at similar intersections of systems and people. Being challenged by peers who ask harder questions and think beyond conventional definitions of technical leadership sharpened my own perspective. I now see human-centered decision making not as a counterweight to innovation, but as a prerequisite for scaling it responsibly.

This experience reinforced an important lesson. Strong leadership does not require becoming louder or more rigid. It requires staying open, thoughtful, and intentional, even as expectations increase.

My hope is that this approach to stewardship influences how decisions are made over time, not only within my organization, but across the industry. As technology continues to advance, the leaders who will matter most are those who understand that the hardest problems are not technical, but human, and who are willing to take responsibility for both.

JULIANA TALEN



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to strengthen my leadership skills and drive meaningful, sustainable change.”

I value leadership, inclusivity, continuous learning, and making a positive impact on my workplace and society.

BIOGRAPHY

Juliana is an experienced GIS professional with over 8 years of experience across Canada and New Zealand. She holds a bachelor's degree in Geographical Information Science (GIS) from the University of Regina and a certificate in GIS for Resource Management from Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Currently, Juliana works as a GIS Technician at ATCO Gas, where she applies her expertise in data management, analysis and visualization to support gas infrastructure projects. Professionally, Juliana is known for integrating technologies, applying geospatial analysis, improving efficiency, data management, and visualization to enable informed and sustainable decision making.

A lifelong athlete, former national-level swimmer, and avid traveler, Juliana brings resilience, teamwork, and adaptability into her STEM career. Her experiences navigating different industries, countries, and organization structures have shaped her understanding of systemic barriers and the importance of inclusive, forward-thinking systems. Juliana is passionate about leveraging technology, collaboration and diverse perspectives to build solutions that reflect the needs of a rapidly changing world aligning strongly with WISE Planet's mission to empower underrepresented voices and future STEM leaders.

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LEAP PROJECT

Creating Equity Across the Organization through a Facility Audit

The focus of my LEAP project strengthens employee retention and workplace inclusion by addressing inequities in access to essential toiletries, particularly menstrual products across workplace washrooms in ATCO's Alberta-based facilities. Although the organization had previously approved the provision of the menstrual products through the Workplace Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (WIDE) initiative, implementation varied by building and floor. Some locations offered no products, others provided limited supplies, while a few were more stocked. These inconsistencies created unequal experiences for employees and reduced the impact of an initiative intended to promote equity and inclusion.

The purpose of the project was to revisit and reinforce the implementation of this initiative by improving consistency and long-term sustainability. Access to menstrual products may appear to be a small operational detail, but it plays an important role in employee comfort, well-being, and inclusion. Ensuring consistent access helps reduce barriers faced by women and marginalized groups and reinforces the organization's commitment to creating supportive and equitable workplace environment.

The project involved collaboration with different departments to identify gaps in existing washroom supplies and clarify responsibilities for restocking and maintenance. Through this work, it became evident that some buildings had been missed during the original rollout or were not replenished once supplies were depleted. In response, processes were strengthened to better integrate toiletry checks into regular custodial and facilities routines, aligning them with the maintenance of other essential washroom supplies.

As a result of this project, consistency in access to toiletries improved across multiple buildings and floors, and clearer accountability was established for ongoing maintenance. The initiative reinforced the importance of embedding equity-focused practices into everyday operations rather than treating them as one-time actions. While funding and long-term expansion remain considerations, the completed LEAP project successfully helped re-established an approved equity initiative and integrate it more effectively into operational processes.

Overall, this project demonstrates how small, practical changes in everyday workplace environments can have a meaningful impact on inclusion, employee experience, and company culture. By addressing an often-overlooked need, the initiative contributes to a more inclusive workplace and provides a foundation for future enhancements, such as expanded product options and more sustainable supply practices.

LAURA ATKINSON



"I joined WISE Planet because I am committed to expanding inclusive learning opportunities for all students."

I value equity, curiosity, and meaningful learning.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Laura Atkinson is an Assistant Professor in the Biology Department at Mount Royal University, where she has taught for over 14 years. Her teaching philosophy emphasizes critical thinking, independent learning, and student engagement through innovative, research-integrated pedagogies. She has developed Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) across multiple courses to expand equitable access to authentic research opportunities in STEM. By embedding research directly into coursework, these experiences remove traditional barriers to undergraduate research while cultivating technical skills, scientific inquiry, and science communication. Her students have presented their work at local, national, and international conferences, earning top awards for their research. Through this inclusive approach to curriculum design, Dr. Atkinson supports equity, diversity, and inclusion by empowering students from diverse backgrounds to become confident, curious, and capable scientists prepared to contribute to an innovative and evolving STEM landscape.

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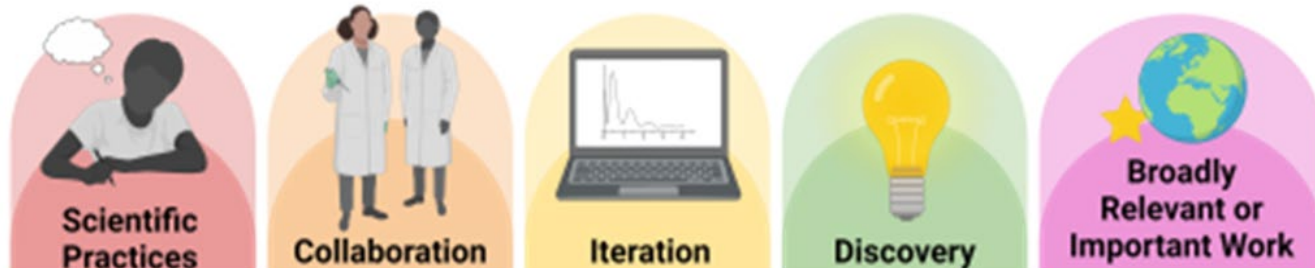
LEAP PROJECT

Increasing Access to Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs)

Many university students want to participate in research but face barriers such as limited awareness of opportunities, financial constraints, or uncertainty about how to get involved. Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) offer an inclusive solution by embedding authentic research directly into regular courses, making research accessible to all students simply through course enrollment. This LEAP project focused on increasing awareness and capacity for CUREs within Mount Royal University's Faculty of Science and Technology by supporting faculty to identify, design, and sustain research-integrated courses.

Over the course of the project, a faculty development workshop was created to help instructors understand what defines a CURE, recognize opportunities within their own courses, and explore practical and sustainable assessment strategies. Faculty participants worked collaboratively with their own course outlines to align learning outcomes with core CURE elements and to consider how course-based research can support or expand their scholarly programs. In addition to the workshop, supporting resources were developed to provide ongoing guidance beyond the session itself.

The project demonstrated that small, intentional changes to course design can meaningfully expand access to undergraduate research while also enriching faculty teaching and scholarship. The next steps include refining the workshop, expanding participation across disciplines, and developing mechanisms to formally recognize CUREs within the curriculum—laying the groundwork for a sustainable, institution-wide approach to equitable undergraduate research experiences.



Elements of a CURE

LUIS VIRLA ALVARADO



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to connect with people with similar values and find the strength to catalyze change as a community.”

I value optimism, positivity, and resilience as guiding principles for driving innovation toward a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Luis D. Virla is an Assistant Professor in the Sustainable Systems Engineering program and the Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering at the University of Calgary. He earned a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Calgary (2018) and a BSc. (2008) and MSc. (2013) in Chemical Engineering from the University of Zulia in Venezuela.

Luis has 15+ years of experience in research and development on chemicals, carbon management, and industrial decarbonization. He is also the acting CTO of Vortis Carbon Corp., a cleantech start-up focused on carbon capture, removal, and utilization, and co-founder of InnoLab space, an NGO focused on supporting community-led sustainability initiatives.

Before joining UCalgary, Luis held research fellowships at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) - University of Sussex (UK, 2016-2018) and the Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management (TPM) - TU Delft (NL, 2020-2024), contributing to Horizon Europe projects focused on land-based mitigation strategies (LANDMARC), energy transitions (TRANSrisk), and climate policy (TIPPING+) in Canada, Europe and Latin America.

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LEAP PROJECT

Creeburn Lake Lodge: A climate-land-energy-water reconciliation hub as a Living Lab for Electrification of Ecosystem monitoring and restoration in the Canadian boreal forest (Creeburn CLEAR hub)

The Creeburn CLEAR HUB Living Lab is a pioneering initiative that redefines ecosystem monitoring and restoration in remote regions of Northern Canada through the integration of renewable energy, advanced digital technologies, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Traditional monitoring approaches, reliant on fossil fuels and manual labor, are increasingly incompatible with global sustainability objectives. They fail to deliver the scale, efficiency, and low-carbon performance required to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and industrial pressures. Creeburn CLEAR HUB introduces a paradigm shift: electrifying ecosystem monitoring and restoration using off-grid renewable energy systems combined with smart technologies such as AI, IoT, and remote sensing. This approach minimizes emissions, enhances resilience, and accelerates data-driven decision-making.

Located within the Traditional Territory of the Fort McKay First Nation, the Living Lab builds on a decade-long partnership grounded in trust, reciprocity, and co-creation. It empowers Indigenous leadership in environmental stewardship while aligning with Canada's net-zero commitments and global climate targets. The Lab will prototype mobile electrification modules to power drones, sensors, and data servers for real-time monitoring and predictive modeling. It will also integrate indoor growing systems for Indigenous plant seedlings, improving survival rates and supporting large-scale reforestation efforts critical for carbon sequestration and biodiversity recovery.

The project aims to deliver electrified monitoring tools, AI-driven analytics, and scalable restoration solutions while establishing standards and best practices that can be replicated globally. Knowledge mobilization will occur through open science platforms, community engagement, and creative storytelling, ensuring accessibility and cultural relevance. By embedding Indigenous ecological knowledge into the design and governance of these technologies, the project fosters inclusive innovation and strengthens social equity.

Expected outcomes include advanced monitoring technologies, policy frameworks, and business models that position Canada as a leader in sustainable innovation. Economic benefits will arise from green job creation and commercialization of electrified monitoring systems. Socially, the project enhances Indigenous self-determination and capacity building, creating pathways for community-led climate solutions. Environmentally, it improves carbon sinks, wildfire resilience, and ecosystem health, contributing to planetary stability and global biodiversity goals.

Creeburn CLEAR HUB exemplifies a holistic, community-driven model for sustainability and resilience. By merging cutting-edge technologies with Indigenous wisdom, the project addresses urgent ecological challenges while setting a precedent for equitable and culturally grounded innovation. Its results will inform global strategies for ecosystem monitoring and restoration, ensuring that technological progress and cultural heritage work together to safeguard the planet for future generations.

MARAL AMINPOUR



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to learn from the best and be part of a community that champions equity, diversity, inclusion and meaningful impact.”

I value honesty, curiosity, scientific integrity, collaboration, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence to advance human health.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Aminpour is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Alberta and leads the Aminpour Lab, a computational research group focused on rational drug design and AI-driven drug discovery. Her research lies at the interface of computational biophysics and machine learning, with an emphasis on physics-informed models that enable rational drug design.

Dr. Aminpour completed her PhD in the United States before moving to Canada, where she pursued postdoctoral training across Chemical and Materials Engineering, Oncology, and Physics, ultimately joining Biomedical Engineering at the University of Alberta. This interdisciplinary trajectory has shaped a design-focused engineering approach that directly addresses the Engineering Grand Challenge of Engineering Better Medicines by integrating engineering principles, molecular science, and AI to support drug optimization, drug repurposing, and rational drug-combination discovery. Her research has been applied to therapeutic development in cancer chemotherapy, Alzheimer’s disease, and COVID-19, reflecting the translational breadth of her expertise. She also develops computational frameworks for patient stratification and ADMET-based toxicity assessment to improve the translational success of candidate drugs.

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LEAP PROJECT

Inclusive and Responsible AI for Next-Generation Drug Discovery

This LEAP project focused on integrating Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) principles into an AI-driven drug discovery research program. Artificial intelligence is increasingly used to speed up the discovery of new medicines by analyzing large datasets and predicting which molecules are most likely to be effective or safe. While these tools are powerful, they are not neutral. AI systems learn from existing data and human choices, which means that any gaps or biases in those inputs can directly affect the results.

In drug discovery, this matters because biological responses to drugs can differ based on sex, gender, age, genetics, health status, and social factors. If AI models are trained mainly on data from narrow or unrepresentative populations, their predictions may work well for some groups but poorly for others. For example, if toxicity data comes mostly from studies conducted in male animal models or limited human populations, AI predictions may overlook adverse effects that are more common in women or in older adults. GBA+ provides a structured way to recognize and address these kinds of issues early in the research process.

Through completion of formal GBA+ training and group-based reflection, this project examined how equity considerations intersect with everyday computational drug discovery workflows with a key focus on data representation. The research group reviewed where training data comes from, who is represented in it, and who may be missing. In practice, this meant asking questions such as: Are datasets dominated by a single sex or age group? Do they reflect real-world patient diversity? Are certain conditions or populations underrepresented because they are harder to study or less frequently reported?

Another important focus was the interpretation of AI-predicted outcomes, such as drug efficacy and toxicity. AI models often produce rankings or scores that appear precise, but these outputs depend strongly on the assumptions built into the model. Through a GBA+ lens, the group discussed how these predictions should be interpreted cautiously, especially when models are applied beyond the populations represented in the data. For example, a compound predicted to be safe based on limited datasets may behave differently in populations with different metabolic profiles or coexisting health conditions.

The project also emphasized transparency around model assumptions and limitations with the group working toward clearer documentation of what a model can and cannot reasonably predict. This includes stating when predictions are based on incomplete data or when certain groups may not be well represented. These practices help ensure that downstream decisions—such as which compounds move forward to experimental testing—are made with appropriate context and caution.

This work strengthened the research group's shared understanding of inclusive and responsible AI practices, reinforcing that equity considerations should not be added at the end of a project but embedded early, alongside technical design choices. GBA+ became a tool for asking better scientific questions, not a constraint on innovation.

The next steps involve formalizing these practices into standard operating procedures for AI model development and data curation within the lab. This includes routine checks on dataset composition, structured discussions of potential bias during model evaluation, and clearer communication of uncertainty in AI-generated results. These practices will also be extended to collaborative and translational projects.

By aligning AI innovation with GBA+ principles, this LEAP project contributes to the development of drug discovery tools that are not only faster and more efficient, but also more equitable, reliable, and meaningful for diverse populations.

MARGARET MACCONNACHIE



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to connect with other women in STEM who are passionate about making a positive impact. I wanted to learn how to be the most effective leader for underrepresented groups in STEM.”

I value having opportunities to learn and grow as a scientist, and educator, and a person.

BIOGRAPHY

Margaret grew up in lovely Calgary, Alberta. She obtained her BSc.H. in Chemistry, with a minor in Classical Studies, and her Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from Queen's University at Kingston. Her research focused on applications of multi-elemental analysis in forensic and archaeological sciences, and led her to conduct research internationally in Denmark.

Following the completion of her studies, she stayed in Kingston to teach several general chemistry courses at Queen's and fell in love with teaching. In 2024, she joined the Department of Chemistry and Physics at Mount Royal University as an assistant professor, teaching general and analytical chemistry. Although she thoroughly enjoyed her time living in Ontario, she is thrilled to be back home, and to share her love for chemistry!

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LEAP PROJECT

Stopping the Leaks Before They Happen

The gender gap in STEM fields is stark. Despite monumental progress being made around the world, there is a clear and persistent underrepresentation of women in STEM. The motivation behind this project is a phenomenon known as 'The Leaky Pipeline', the idea that despite the interest and ability to succeed in STEM careers, many women tend not to pursue STEM fields. This term was first coined in 1989, and although some view it as overly simplistic, it remains a powerful metaphor for women's involvement in STEM. It highlights crucial decision-making moments throughout a career in which women may divert from STEM fields. This is not just about individual choices; it is about systematic barriers that prevent women from pursuing STEM. This 'leaky pipeline' effect has impacts that go far deeper than a lack of representation within. The gender disparity shapes the workforce, in industry and in academia, which compounds to shape things such as governance, policies, and even things as simple as product design.

Although there is no single stage to focus on for reducing the gender gap in STEM, this project aims to work on reducing the first major source of 'leaks' – that is, female students not pursuing stem courses in high school (thereby lowering their STEM readiness and reducing the number of women who will pursue STEM majors post-secondary). This project provides engaging and inspiring STEM content to students in a junior high setting. Students have the chance to explore STEM beyond what they typically see in schools, with the goal of sparking curiosity. Students also have the chance to connect with strong female role models in various science professions. This visibility is key: if young girls can see themselves represented in STEM, then they are far more likely to pursue it. The primary goal of this project is to focus on early career intervention; to give students a positive experience with science at a junior high school level – hopefully preventing one of the first instances of 'leaking' from the pipeline.

A Leaking STEM Pipeline

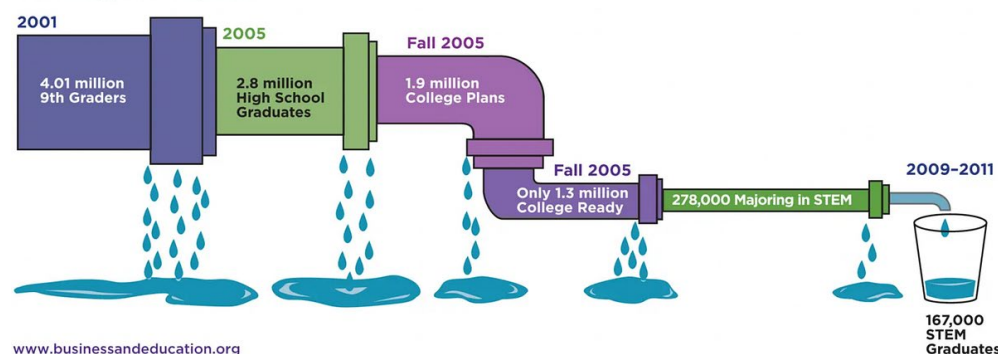


Image credits : Addressing the STEM Pipeline Problem, Natasha Matta, Medium, 2022.
<https://medium.com/rediscover-steam/addressing-the-stem-pipeline-problem-c896aodfd777>

While working with junior high schools in Calgary, it has become clear to me how many challenges exist in the junior high environment, that I had not previously considered, such as very large class sizes. The lack of individualized attention that can be offered by teachers in environments where there are 35-40 students per class impacts everyone and can prevent students from having an effective and positive introduction to the sciences. Although this project remains in the early stages, I look forward to seeing it flourish and positively impacting students in the Calgary area.

MAYADA SHAHADA



“I joined WISE Planet because it serves as a powerful platform to fulfill my belief that education is a fundamental right, enabling me to help ensure that every student, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.”

I value the transformative power of education as a fundamental right, believing it can break barriers and ignite lasting change, empowering individuals to shape a brighter future for themselves and their communities.

BIOGRAPHY

I am Dr. Mayada Khalil Shahada, an Assistant Professor (Teaching) in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Calgary, where I strive to make mathematics relevant and enjoyable for all students. My journey as a mathematician is shaped by diverse experiences as an immigrant, educator, and advocate for equitable opportunities in academia.

Drawing strength from the challenges I've faced, I find fulfillment in inspiring students and nurturing their love for learning. I employ innovative methods and outreach initiatives to make mathematics accessible to a broader audience, reflecting my commitment to supporting at-risk students through initiatives like my LEAP project.

With a Ph.D. in Mathematics from Western University, I have taught courses such as Calculus and Abstract Algebra at both undergraduate and graduate levels, earning recognition for my dedicated approach to student success. I believe effective teaching involves creating an inclusive environment that fosters curiosity and critical thinking. By integrating real-world applications into my curriculum, I aim to empower students to realize their potential and achieve their academic goals.

WEBSITE

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LEAP PROJECT

Empowering At-Risk University Students: Development of Accredited Online Modules for Academic Continuity, Innovation, and Stability in Post-Conflict Recovery

My LEAP project addresses a critical issue: the educational disruptions faced by university students caught in conflicts and crises, including refugees and individuals in war-torn regions. These disruptions significantly impact many students' ability to pursue their academic goals. The primary aim of this initiative is to develop a series of accredited online modules specifically designed for these vulnerable populations. By offering flexible, self-paced learning opportunities, I hope to empower students to continue their higher education, regardless of personal challenges. The modules will cover essential subjects aligned with academic standards and local curricula, utilizing interactive tools like video lectures, quizzes, portfolios, and discussion forums to create engaging learning experiences. This format allows students to work toward their degrees while accommodating their unique circumstances.

Recognizing the intrinsic link between mental well-being and academic success, I am integrating robust mental health support into the project. This includes access to trained counselors and workshops focused on resilience and stress management, tailored to the specific challenges faced by students in crisis situations. Additionally, community engagement initiatives, such as peer mentorship programs, will foster connections among students, enabling them to share experiences and support one another in their educational journeys. Equitable access to educational resources is a core value of this initiative. I aim to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic backgrounds, can access high-quality educational materials. This encompasses providing necessary technological support, such as internet access and devices, along with financial assistance programs to alleviate economic pressures. By actively identifying and eliminating barriers, I aspire to create an inclusive educational environment that empowers marginalized groups to thrive academically.

To effectively reach and engage users in this project, I will implement a multi-faceted strategy. By utilizing user-friendly online course platforms, conducting regular workshops, and maintaining an active social media presence, I aim to provide diverse avenues for students to access educational content and support. Inclusivity is paramount; all materials and communications will be designed to be accessible and culturally sensitive. Additionally, I will establish ongoing feedback mechanisms to enable students to share their experiences, facilitating continuous improvement of courses offerings and support services.

To evaluate the project's impact, I will concentrate on key performance indicators related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Metrics such as enrollment demographics, student satisfaction, and long-term academic outcomes, like graduation rates, will guide our efforts. To frame our work, I seek to explore how we can ensure that all at-risk university students, including refugees and those in war zones, have equitable access to accredited online education and support services.

Over the past year, I have made significant strides in developing the project's framework through my volunteer work teaching Gazan students at An-Najah National University. This experience allowed me to engage directly with students and understand their unique challenges, informing the project's direction. I have also actively collaborated with local universities and NGOs to form partnerships that will amplify our impact. These collaborations have underscored the importance of adaptability and community input in crafting effective educational solutions.

Looking ahead, my next steps will include piloting our online modules, gathering feedback for improvement, and scaling our outreach efforts to ensure a broader impact. I plan to maintain my community connections and pursue potential supporters to expand the project's network and resources. Ultimately, my long-term vision is to transform the educational landscape for at-risk students over the next decade. I aspire to cultivate a generation of empowered graduates who possess the skills and confidence to drive positive change within their communities.

NGA NGHIEM



“I joined WISE Planet because I’m enthusiastic about creating equitable opportunities for the next generation and want to learn how to turn that passion into measurable impact.”

I value curiosity, innovation, and mentorship—building pathways that make STEM more accessible for everyone.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a passionate advocate for education equity, currently serving as a Campaign Ambassador at a Calgary non-profit. I raise funds and awareness for youth programs that provide tutoring, mentorship, and emotional support—resources I wish had existed when I was growing up.

I was raised in one of Calgary’s most underserved neighborhoods, where financial hardship and systemic neglect were everyday realities. Overcrowded classrooms, underfunded schools, and parents stretched thin made it easy for children to fall behind. I will never forget meeting a mother whose sixth-grade daughter still could not read—she had to move towns for a better education while working extra shifts to survive. Stories like hers remind me why this work matters.

I became the first in my family to graduate and work as a mechanical engineer. My journey taught me that education is more than academics—it is empowerment and freedom.

Today, I use my voice and platform to advocate for equitable access to education. Through fundraising, community engagement, and partnerships, I aim to ensure every child—regardless of background—could dream bigger, achieve more, and break the cycle of poverty through education.

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LEAP PROJECT

STEPS2WISE & STEM

Originally, my LEAP Project was titled “STEPS2WISE+STEM”, a proposed outreach program to partner my company with Calgary schools (either through the Calgary Board of Education or the Calgary Catholic School District). The idea was to target Grade 6 students in schools with the lowest math scores, to provide focused support—tutoring, mentorship, and hands on STEM experiences—to help students in foundational years build confidence in math and science. The goal was not only academic improvement, but to help kids begin to see STEM as accessible, and to reward improvement and excellence with scholarships and exposure to STEM careers (for example through “Take Your Kid to Work Day”). My plan included measurable goals, supply support, volunteer mentors, and building sustainability via embedding the program in existing corporate & school partnerships.

Since then, my LEAP direction has evolved: I am now working as a Campaign Ambassador on a secondment at a nonprofit that runs youth wellbeing and equity programs. Key among these is All in for Youth.

All in for Youth is a collaborative initiative designed to remove systemic barriers so that students can stay in school, graduate on time, and make successful transitions into education or employment. It provides supports such as tutoring, bursaries, success coaches, mentorship, and academic and mental health supports.

In my role now, the LEAP Project shifts from designing a direct outreach/tutoring STEM program to fundraising, speaking, and modelling educational equity via these nonprofit programs. I still see the same goals: supporting youth, especially those facing academic and socio-economic barriers, focusing on equity, and helping them see possibility. But instead of building the program from scratch (as with STEPS2WISE+STEM), my work amplifies and sustains programs that already have infrastructure, community trust, and evidence backing.

PATRICIA ARISS



"I joined WISE Planet because I want to continue growing, challenging myself, and being an example of representation where I see a gap. I want women coming behind me to never even have to consider if there's space and opportunity for women in my field."

I value transparency, compassion, collaboration, hard work, and a willingness to learn.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a Cyber Threat Intelligence and Investigations Specialist at ATCO, with a background spanning law enforcement, cybersecurity, and high-performance sport. I earned my BA in Sociology and Psychology from the University of Alberta, where I also competed as a member of the Pandas basketball team. After completing a certificate in Broadcast Journalism, I entered a decade long policing career with the Calgary Police Service.

I spent my last five years with CPS in the Cybercrime Investigations Unit, where I received specialized training in online and real-world undercover operations, and electronic and physical surveillance. My investigative work involved collaboration with agencies including the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, Homeland Security Investigations, RCMP, Europol, and Manchester Police.

Choosing to transition into the private sector rather than leave the cyber domain, I joined ATCO in 2023. After six months of intensive upskilling in digital forensics, cyber threat intelligence, and network security, I moved into my current role, where I work with a highly skilled team protecting the organization against evolving cyber threats.

LEAP PROJECT

Beyond the Classroom: SOC Experiential Learning and Resilience Development Program

Modern cybersecurity operations demand a workforce capable of not only technical excellence but also emotional resilience under pressure. However, many post-secondary programs continue to rely heavily on classroom instruction and controlled lab simulations, leaving graduates underexposed to the realities of areas such as Security Operations Centre (SOC) environments and the acute stressors inherent in incident response. My LEAP project proposes a two-phase initiative designed to close this gap and better prepare emerging cyber professionals for the operational and psychological demands of real-world security work.

Phase 1: The SOC Experiential Learning and “Ride-Along” Program

This aims to introduce a structured yet lightweight engagement model in which post-secondary students spend short rotations embedded in a functioning SOC. While not as intensive as a full co-op term, the program mirrors the successful approach used in policing, where recruits observe real-time field operations early in their training. By witnessing live incident response, cross-team collaboration, and the dynamic nature of threat management, students will gain contextual understanding that cannot be replicated in classroom labs. This early exposure supports more informed career decisions, stronger engagement with academic content, and a smoother transition into industry roles. Many entry-level roles require applicants to already have work experience, which is unattainable and unrealistic for those entering the workforce directly from a post-secondary education. By providing some real-world exposure, this gives potential applicants experience they can apply to their potential roles.

Phase 2: Integrating stress-management and coping-skill training directly into relevant academic programs.

Cyber incident responders must perform effectively in high-pressure situations where stakes are high, time is limited, and interpersonal tensions can escalate. Yet, unlike fields such as policing or healthcare, cybersecurity education rarely addresses the emotional and behavioural realities of crisis response. By collaborating with post-secondary institutions to incorporate resilience-building modules like emotional regulation, communication under stress, and strategies for navigating high-conflict scenarios, the project aims to equip future practitioners with the psychological readiness required for sustained success in frontline cyber roles.

Together, these two components form a holistic development model that reflects the operational maturity of other high-stress professions. The project ultimately seeks to strengthen workforce readiness, reduce burnout among early-career cybersecurity staff, and foster a new generation of cyber defenders who are both technically skilled and mentally resilient.

NHI NGO



“I joined the WISE Planet to foster meaningful connections and embrace diverse perspectives. I believe that inclusion is essential to building stronger, more creative teams.”

I value resilience, curiosity, and quiet creativity – they guide how I work, learn, and connect.

BIOGRAPHY

I graduated from the University of Alberta in 2022 and now work as an Engineer-in-Training at ATCO Pipelines, where I manage integrity projects on gas transmission pipelines. My journey began in Vietnam, where I grew up in a close-knit family that instilled in me the values of resilience, independence, and curiosity. At 15, I moved to a new city for better education, a decision that shaped my confidence and sparked a dream to study abroad. At 18, I made that dream a reality by moving to Canada to pursue engineering. Navigating a new country, language, and culture while studying a demanding field taught me perseverance and adaptability – qualities I carry into every project.

Outside of work, I recharge through quiet hobbies like reading, knitting, crocheting, cooking, and gardening. I share my home with a curious bunny named Banh Mi (yes, like the sandwich!), who keeps life playful and reminds me to stay curious.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

2026 Diversity Calendar – Celebrating Cultures, Honoring Traditions

As part of my LEAP project, I'm creating a 2026 Diversity Calendar that highlights holidays and significant observances from a wide range of cultures, religions, and communities. The goal is to improve visibility, promote awareness, and foster a more inclusive workplace where employees feel seen, respected, and celebrated.

The calendar will feature:

- **Major cultural and religious holidays** (e.g., Lunar New Year, Eid, Diwali, Hanukkah, Vesak)
- **Heritage and awareness months** (e.g., Black History Month, Pride Month, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month)
- **Global observances** that reflect shared human values (e.g., International Women's Day, World Mental Health Day)

Inspired by ATCO's **Flexible Statutory Holiday Exchange** program and our first **Lunar New Year celebration**, this calendar aims to spark curiosity, encourage cultural dialogue, and support inclusive planning across teams.

To maximize accessibility and impact:

- The calendar will be available **digitally** for easy reference and integration into team workflows.
- A **physical print edition** will also be available for order, allowing employees to display it in their workspaces and common areas as a daily reminder of our shared commitment to inclusion.

By increasing visibility of these important dates, the Diversity Calendar will help deepen appreciation for one another and strengthen our workplace culture. I also hope to pair it with storytelling opportunities, where employees can share how they celebrate these occasions.

Together, we can build a workplace where inclusion is not just a value – it's a lived experience.

POOJA WOOSAREE



“Inspired by my mentors who work tirelessly to create an inclusive environment, I joined WISE Planet to continue building on that drive for change and to promote inclusivity in STEM.”

I value being confident in my abilities and expressing myself unapologetically.

BIOGRAPHY

I am a physicist and postdoctoral fellow at the University of Calgary within the Schulich School of Engineering. I completed my PhD in Physics (2025) at the University of Calgary, where I contributed to the first measurement of antihydrogen free fall using a radial time projection chamber. My current research builds on this work in a new and exciting direction: developing a quantum sensing device for applications beyond the laboratory. I am also Vice President of the Fusion Energy Council of Canada, where I help promote a nuclear fusion energy future for Canada, and develop programs aimed at students and early-career professionals regarding careers in fusion energy.

In addition to my research, I am actively involved in several groups that promote equity, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility in STEM. I co-produce episodes for a podcast called The PAM Talks, which promotes engaging scientific research through the voices of gender-diverse leaders. Through leadership, advocacy, and mentorship, I aim to support the next generation of scientists while shaping STEM spaces that value diverse perspectives, collaboration, and belonging.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Fuse A2I – Bridging Academia to Industry in the Fusion Energy Sector

The transition to industry after completing advanced degrees should be seamless. Within physics in particular, it is unclear where or how the skills learned while pursuing a graduate degree translate into industry roles. I am launching an initiative that bridges the gap between academia and industry by helping companies see the potential of advanced degrees as relevant and valuable work experience. Within my network at the Fusion Energy Council of Canada, I am developing a program that will enable students and young professionals to foster skills that will ease the transition into a career in the fusion energy sector. This will involve connecting with industry partners to address missing elements in their workforce and determining how students fill that space.

The next phases of this project involve

1. Engaging with leaders from similar programs to establish the foundational framework for moving this initiative.
2. Connecting with industry leaders to identify workforce needs for the next generation.
3. Engaging students and early-career professionals to build awareness and participation in the program.

Although this initiative begins with a nuclear energy perspective, I aim to expand this program to include a broad range of sectors that would benefit from physicists. This opportunity will be for everyone and will be developed through a lens of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

RAE MAZZEI



“I joined WISE Planet to strengthen my leadership skills, build connections, and support inclusivity in STEM.”

I value the opportunity to learn from the people around me.

BIOGRAPHY

I’m an engineer in training at Pembina and a graduate of the University of British Columbia, where I completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Mechanical Engineering. I’m just starting out in my engineering career, focusing on building my technical skills while also learning how to communicate and collaborate effectively with my team. I’ve found that working with people and building connections has been one of the most enjoyable parts of the job so far. I’m passionate about making STEM a more inclusive and supportive space, and I’m excited to continue growing my career at Pembina. Programs like WISE Planet have helped me meet new people, gain valuable tools, and navigate challenges, and I’m looking forward to applying what I’ve learned to make a positive impact. I’m eager to keep learning, growing, and contributing to both my team and the broader engineering community as I move forward in my career.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Pembina Student Development Series

I created the Pembina Student Development Series to inspire, educate, and connect students, helping them grow professionally while fostering a sense of belonging within the team. This program consisted of speaker sessions, interactive activities, and networking opportunities. It aimed to not only provide students with tools for success but also to improve retention by fostering a sense of community and encouraging them to envision a future with Pembina. Through the career stories and accomplishments of Pembina leaders, the program introduced students to relatable role models and offered practical guidance to help them map out their career paths within the company. Additionally, it created opportunities for students to build meaningful connections and develop skills that would support their long-term professional growth.

Goals and Achievements

The program was structured around three key goals: **Inspire**, **Educate**, and **Connect**.

- **Inspire:** Pembina leaders shared their career journeys, including the challenges they faced and the successes they achieved. These stories demonstrated that career growth isn't always a straight path and that overcoming obstacles can lead to valuable opportunities.
- **Educate:** Sessions provided practical advice on resume writing, LinkedIn optimization, interview preparation, and insights into Pembina's hiring process. Students gained an understanding of what recruiters look for and learned how to present themselves effectively in job applications.
- **Connect:** Networking and mentorship were key parts of the program. Students learned how to build professional relationships and expand their networks through coffee chats with coworkers, Q&A sessions with senior leaders, and advice on how to follow up after meeting someone.

Key Takeaways

Over the course of this program, I gained valuable experience in planning and coordinating sessions, as well as facilitating meaningful conversations that resonated with students. I learned a great deal about leadership and how it looks at this early stage of my career. Looking ahead, I believe the next steps should involve formalizing this program to ensure it becomes an annual initiative during the summer. To support this, I gathered survey responses from students after the program concluded, including ideas for future topics, which I believe should be incorporated into a structured program. By building on this foundation and refining the program based on feedback, I am confident it can continue to make a lasting impact on students and contribute to their professional growth while strengthening their connection to Pembina.

RAVDEEP KAUR BATTH



“I joined WISE Planet with a belief that knowledge, when shared with an intention, can be transformative. Through WISE Planet, I am continually reminded that representation matters, mentorship is transformative, and persistence is essential to creating lasting change.”

I value my commitment to supporting voices that have been overlooked, challenging barriers that remain, and creating spaces where everyone can thrive.

BIOGRAPHY

I was born where the sun rose over dust & prayer,
where beginnings are humble & dreams begin quietly,
where hopes learn to travel early & wait for courage to
carry them forward.

I crossed an ocean carrying little more than belief,
Here in Canada I learned how to build—
a life stitched together with patience, work, & the
courage to start again.

Each day at work, I step into rooms
filled with questions & doubts.
I teach not just concepts but confidence—
watching faces change when clarity arrives,
when something once difficult finally makes sense.

Those moments stay with me:
the spark of understanding, the relief, the pride—
small victories that ripple outward into lives
I may never fully know.

And when the day is done,
my greatest joy waits at home—
the sound of my children laughing,
unburdened & bright,
a reminder of everything I have built &
everything I am grateful for.

This is my journey: rooted in one land,
grown in another,
measured not by distance traveled,
but by lives touched— and by the quiet,
enduring the joy of having arrived.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Advancing Equity in STEM Education: Understanding the Impact of Metacognition in Narrowing Academic Performance Gaps

My passion has always been teaching.

For a significant period, my professional trajectory was shaped—and at times constrained—by a few personal hurdles. While these experiences delayed the development of my formal research profile, they also deepened my understanding of persistence, equity, and purpose. Now, in a more settled stage of my life, I have intentionally designed a LEAP project that serves a dual purpose. First, it allows me to re-engage meaningfully with scholarly research and re-establish my academic research identity. Second, and equally important, it enables me to enhance the learning of my students in ways that extend beyond disciplinary competence to lifelong skills, confidence, and agency.

My LEAP project is to embed metacognitive practices into first-year science courses, with the aim to help my students become aware, adaptive, and self-regulated learners. This vision is larger than one course or one discipline. If students learn how to learn early through these metacognitive activities, they don't just improve grades—they change academic trajectories, persistence, and confidence across the university. This project envisions a shift from teaching science alone to teaching students how to learn. At its core, this LEAP project asks a simple but powerful question: Are we teaching students what they need to succeed—not just in a course, but in their lives as learners?

Through my teaching undergraduate courses at MRU, I have become acutely aware of a persistent gap between the education students need and the education they often receive. My LEAP project seeks to address this gap directly—by aligning pedagogical practices with real-world applications, metacognition, and equity-informed learning.

My LEAP follows a double-pronged approach—rekindling my research while strengthening educational impact—that reflects both my professional evolution and my commitment to improving the systems in which we teach and learn. It is not simply a return to research; it is a purposeful integration of scholarship, teaching, and responsibility to my students' futures.

SEOYEON (CALI) PARK



“I joined WISE Planet because creating inclusive spaces where diverse students can thrive is important.”

I value creating community and representation in the mathematical and statistical sciences.

BIOGRAPHY

Seoyeon (Cali) Park is a thesis-based MSc student in Statistics at the University of Alberta, supervised by Dr. Jay Newby. She holds a BSc Honours in Statistics with a minor in Mathematics and a certificate in Data Analytics from Dalhousie University. Her leadership work centers on advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion within the mathematical sciences, particularly through her role with the Association for Women in Mathematics Student Chapter at UAlberta. Through organizing career talks, seminar series, and co-founding Weekly Women in Mathematics Meet-Ups, she has worked to create supportive and inclusive spaces for women and gender-minority students in STEM. These initiatives emphasized representation, community-building, and accessible pathways in mathematics. She is committed to continuing outreach and mentorship efforts that foster belonging and opportunity in mathematics and statistics.

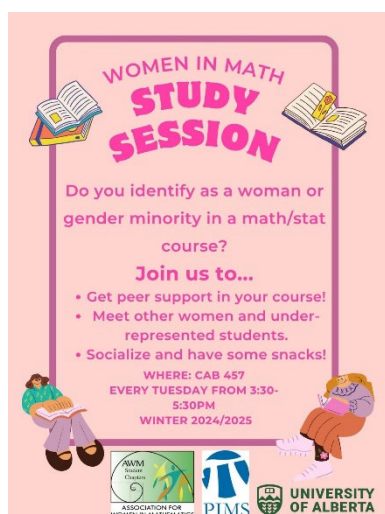
LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Association for Women in Mathematics Student Chapter, University of Alberta

My LEAP project focused on advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion within the mathematical sciences through my leadership with the Association for Women in Mathematics Student Chapter at the University of Alberta. In a field where gender diversity remains limited, my goal has been to help create a community where women and gender-minority students feel supported, represented, and empowered in their academic journeys.



As the chapter's primary officer, I led several initiatives designed to make the department more inclusive and to highlight diverse pathways in STEM. I helped organize events such as the *MSS Career Talk for Math Majors* and continued our annual seminar series, which introduced students to a wide range of careers where mathematics plays a central role. These events not only broadened students' understanding of what is possible with a math degree but also provided meaningful representation by featuring women working across academic and industry roles.

One of the most impactful parts of my work was co-founding our Weekly Women in Mathematics Meet-Ups. These informal gatherings were created as a safe and welcoming space for students to share experiences, seek support, and build confidence in an environment that can often feel isolating. The friendships, mentorship connections, and sense of belonging that grew from these meetings reinforced the importance of community-

building in promoting student success.

This year taught me how powerful student-led initiatives can be in shifting culture and improving the academic experience for underrepresented groups. Moving forward, I hope to expand outreach efforts, particularly toward young girls and gender-minority youth in Edmonton, to help inspire future generations to pursue mathematics and statistics. My next steps include developing workshops, strengthening mentorship networks, and continuing to build bridges across the STEM community.

Overall, this project has deepened my commitment to equity in STEM and strengthened my belief that representation, community, and accessible opportunities are critical to creating a more inclusive future in the mathematical sciences.



SEPIDEH BAHADORIPOUR



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to grow as a leader while contributing to community-driven impact in AI.”

I value inclusive communities where diverse voices shape how AI is built and used.

BIOGRAPHY

Sepideh Bahadoripour is a machine learning professional. She holds a master’s from the University of Calgary and works on LLM-driven products, including document understanding, classification, and retrieval-augmented generation workflows. As a volunteer with Women in AI, she helps build an inclusive community by supporting event planning and delivery, speaker outreach, partnerships, and mentoring initiatives that lower barriers to learning and careers in AI. She is passionate about responsible AI, practical education, and creating spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can connect, share knowledge, and grow their confidence in the field.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Women in AI Volunteer Leadership: Growing an Inclusive AI Community

Women in AI is a community where people come together to learn, network, and create opportunities for women and allies in artificial intelligence. My LEAP project focuses on the behind-the-scenes work that makes that community possible. As a volunteer, I support the planning and execution of events and initiatives that help members move from curiosity to confidence - whether they are students exploring AI for the first time or professionals transitioning into the field.

Over the past year, I contributed to organizing meetups, talks, and skills-focused sessions by helping identify topics, recruit speakers, coordinate logistics, and promote events through community channels. I also helped strengthen partnerships with local organizations and universities, and supported mentorship and peer-connection activities that encourage people to share their experiences and learn from one another in a welcoming setting.

A key learning from this work is that inclusion does not happen automatically - it is created through consistent, practical actions: clear onboarding for volunteers, thoughtful event formats that invite participation, and content that is accessible to different experience levels. Another learning is the value of translating complex AI concepts into everyday language so more people can engage with the technology and its impacts.

Next steps include formalizing lightweight playbooks for event delivery (templates, checklists, and timelines), expanding mentorship pathways (for example, matching newcomers with volunteers or industry professionals), and broadening the range of topics to include responsible AI, career development, and hands-on practice sessions. The goal is to make it easier for more people to participate, contribute, and feel that they belong in AI.

SHAGHAYEGH SHAJARI



“I joined WISE Planet because advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in engineering, especially in addressing longstanding barriers faced by women, requires intentional, informed leadership to translate awareness into meaningful change. Wise Planet offers a comprehensive set of modules that illuminates systematic barriers in academia.”

I value creating pathways where the right resources, mentorship, and support reach people where they are, turning equity into meaningful and sustained action.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Shaghayegh Shajari is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical, Industrial, and Mechatronics Engineering at Toronto Metropolitan University. She earned her PhD in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering from the University of Calgary, where her research focused on smart polymer-based soft materials and nanomaterials for wearable health monitoring and flexible electronics. Her doctoral work was recognized with multiple awards, including the Alberta Innovates Technology Futures Award. She has held NSERC postdoctoral fellowship at Northwestern University and research position at the University of California, Los Angeles, developing wearable biosensing, microfluidic, and implantable biomedical technologies for real-time and personalized health applications. Dr. Shajari is deeply committed to mentorship, equity, and leadership in engineering. She has served in leadership and volunteer roles across numerous academic and professional organizations, including as President of the Mechanical Engineering Graduate Student Association at the University of Calgary. Her leadership and service contributions were recognized with the Graduate Citizenship Award and the Graduate Engineering Student Citizenship Award. She was invited to serve as an Associate Editor for the inaugural Women in Sensors volume in Frontiers in Sensors, supporting the visibility of women leaders in science and engineering.

WEBSITE

<https://www.torontomu.ca/mechanical-industrial-mechatronics/people/faculty/shaghayegh-shajari/>

LEAP PROJECT

Building an Inclusive Research Training Ecosystem and Expanding Access to Academic Pathways

Across Canada, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are increasingly recognized as essential to research excellence and innovation. Yet, national and institutional data continue to show persistent underrepresentation of women, Indigenous Peoples, racialized scholars, persons with disabilities, and gender-diverse individuals in STEM, particularly in engineering and biomedical fields and at advanced career stages. Nationally, women represent approximately 35% of faculty in natural sciences and engineering and only about 30% of NSERC-funded investigators, despite constituting nearly 39% of postsecondary NSE students. Indigenous Peoples remain critically underrepresented, comprising only 1.3% of university faculty compared to approximately 4% of the Canadian labour force, with less than 1% representation among NSERC-funded Discovery Grant holders (Statistics Canada, PSIS 2020–2021; UCASS 2020–2021; SPFR 2021; Census 2021; NSERC EDI Dashboard, 2019–2023). These disparities reflect a persistent “leaky pipeline,” where equity-deserving groups are lost at key transition points from training to independent research careers. At Toronto Metropolitan University, women represent approximately 27% of students overall and less than 15% in Mechanical, Mechatronics, and Industrial Engineering, while representation of Indigenous students and students with disabilities remains below 2–3%.

Beyond numerical underrepresentation, academic career pathways are shaped by structural exclusion embedded in informal hiring, evaluation, and networking practices. Despite formal equity commitments, faculty and instructional hiring often rely heavily on internal familiarity and established professional networks. In practice, many opportunities are effectively pre-determined before being publicly advertised, disadvantaging candidates without insider access, particularly women, newcomers, caregivers, and scholars from historically excluded groups.

My LEAP project responds to these systemic challenges by developing an inclusive, equity-centered research training ecosystem that supports the recruitment, retention, and advancement of highly qualified personnel (HQP), while preparing trainees to navigate and challenge exclusionary academic systems. This initiative builds on my NSERC Discovery Grant EDI and HQP training framework, translating national priorities into everyday practices.

The project recognizes mentorship as a mechanism for structural change, not simply supervision. Trainees are treated as junior colleagues and supported through a layered mentorship model connecting undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral researchers. This structure promotes peer support, knowledge transfer, and early leadership development, while clear expectations around authorship, decision-making, and career development foster transparency, accountability, and psychological safety. Trainees are also encouraged to engage in outreach, reinforcing their role as future mentors and change leaders in STEM.

Equity is embedded from the earliest recruitment stages through bias-aware selection practices, proactive outreach to equity-focused organizations and collaboration with institutional EDI offices. Research positions are designed to be accessible and flexible, with accommodations and caregiving considerations treated as standard practice. This approach reflects national evidence that equity representation declines sharply at advanced career stages.

This LEAP project also integrates EDI directly into research design. Biomedical technologies developed within the research group are intentionally designed to perform across diverse populations, accounting for differences in sex, gender, skin tone, disability, and cultural context, aligning with Tri-Agency guidance on inclusive research design.

Through this LEAP project, my goal is to move beyond symbolic EDI commitments toward sustainable cultural and structural change. By building an inclusive research training ecosystem grounded in mentorship, transparency, and equity-driven design, this initiative aims to develop excellent science while cultivating a more diverse generation of academic leaders and to reshape Canada’s research landscape with integrity and impact.

SOUMYA THAPLIYAL



“I joined WISE Planet to further build my leadership and strategic thinking to be in an influential place to dismantle systemic barriers for a more equitable industry.”

I value resilience, ambition and authenticity for building a sustainable future.

BIOGRAPHY

Soumya Thapliyal, a Project Engineer at WSP with experience in mining, heavy industrial and decarbonization projects. In her role, Soumya collaborates with multidisciplinary teams, manages project budgets and schedules and facilitates stakeholder management for effective project delivery.

Soumya is a mechanical engineer by discipline and previously held technical, construction management, and project management roles where she contributed to complex industrial projects.

In addition to her professional role, Soumya is actively involved in industry leadership and service. She currently serves as the chair of Women in Consulting Engineering (WCE) Calgary and was previously on the board for WCE Vancouver and ACEC-BC Future Leaders Network.

Her diverse lived experiences have heightened her awareness to microaggressions and biases and Soumya is committed to sustainable development, inclusive leadership, and leveraging engineering to create meaningful, long-term impact for our communities.

LINKEDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/soumya-thapliyal/>

LEAP PROJECT

Career Accelerator for High-Performing Women

A persistent and known challenge in our industry is that talented women often plateau despite strong performance, due to systemic barriers in sponsorship, visibility, and strategic skill development. The Career Accelerator for High Performing Women intends to serve as a structured program that combines leadership coaching, peer accountability, and targeted exposure to decision makers. The initiative focuses on three pillars: Strategic Influence, Network Leverage, and Visibility in High Impact Work. Although the program is in nascent stages of development, the goal would be to have participants engage in curated workshops on topics such as executive presence, negotiation, and systems thinking, paired with mentorship from leaders and cross-disciplinary sponsors. The program would also include a “stretch assignment” component, ensuring participants apply new skills in real projects with measurable outcomes.

By accelerating readiness for leadership roles, this project aims to reduce attrition, strengthen organizational diversity, and create a replicable model for inclusive talent development. This Career Accelerator is not just about advancing individuals, but it’s about reshaping the leadership pipeline to reflect the full spectrum of excellence in our industry.

STEPHANIE LAPKA



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to build leadership skills and confidence in a women-led, compassionate environment.”

I value authentic collaboration, and the power diverse perspectives can have to drive innovation.

BIOGRAPHY

I have always had a passion for ecological science, leading me into STEM. I earned both my BSc and MSc at the University of Calgary with a focus on ecological systems. My academic studies and dynamic career as an environmental practitioner have given me the privilege to visit parts of northern and western Canada most have not. I continue to call Calgary my home with my husband and two children, where I am an Environment Specialist within the power and utilities sector.

LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Right Place, Right Time, Right Outcome

For my WISE Planet LEAP project, I was interested in investigating new opportunities for greater engagement within my organization, specifically, breaking down corporate culture barriers that can exist within a multi-divisional industry and developing initiatives that can influence positive team collaboration. More times than not, within a large organization with diverse sectors, many technical groups have little exposure across their own organization's internal expertise. The result is an incomplete picture of how one group can be supported by the other within their own organization. Throughout the years, I have found this "island effect" within an organization can lead to unconscious bias towards other groups and promote an internal culture of collaboration resistance.

The pilot involves bringing together two internal groups within the organization that currently do not work directly with each other, but their consequences are directly connected (e.g., power system planning and environment). Selected team members from each internal group would attend/shadow each other's project planning meetings during a key timeframe directly related to their group (e.g., annual business case development or annual regulatory compliance reviews) for 1-2 weeks. The goal of the shadowing process is to better understand what considerations each group is facing during these critical timeframes and demonstrate how one group's discussion directly affects each other's ability to carry out their respective roles associated with the project. Most importantly, by having a collaborative environment, solutions could be found that mutually benefit both groups and trust can be built between the groups when they have each other's interests in mind.

SYLVIA LEONG



“I joined WISE Planet because I wanted to be surrounded by strong women leaders.”

I value diverse and creative thought, change making and environmental stewardship.

BIOGRAPHY

Sylvia has over 20 years of experience with Geographic Information Systems and is currently the GIS Data Coordinator at ENMAX Power. She has a B.Sc in Earth Sciences from the University of Calgary and has worked in geological research at the Geological Survey of Canada and with food safety at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. At ENMAX, she works to upkeep data quality and database reliability in tracking assets, facilitates dynamic integrations with other groups and systems such as Maximo, Outage Management, and Finance; utilizing a variety of spatial data analysis, tools and applications to support business operations.

WEBSITE/LINKEDIN

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LEAP PROJECT

Empowering the Energy Transition at ENMAX

The utility industry currently faces huge disruptions to its traditional way of doing business. Being risk adverse, unaccustomed to change, and engineered for one-way flow, energy transition with increasing demand, decarbonization, two-way flow, and customer autonomy poses business, engineering, and regulatory challenges.

What does energy transition mean to our different business groups at ENMAX and how can it align with our strategies and current initiatives? As a part of a discovery process, over 15 hours of interviews were conducted across various business groups at ENMAX; a few findings emerged from these interviews.

Communication, Customer Behaviour and Data Sharing:

There is opportunity to clarify our current grid picture and energy transition strategy. Work is happening across multiple teams, so aligning data and efforts will ensure a coordinated approach.

Distributed Energy Resource (DER) uptake is rising, and understanding the pace and depth of customer behaviour change is paramount to future market success. Customer connections are actively tracked and monitored, but little is known about customers' use of electric vehicles (EV's), chargers, home batteries, and/or heat pumps. Given the DER evolution, our market framework has limited our ability to invest in customer-facing systems.

Regulatory and Financial Limitations:

Many utilities are financially constrained and focused on base business investment requirements related to supporting significant customer growth in their jurisdiction, aging infrastructure, and more extreme climate events.

Limited funding exists for energy transition itself, i.e. upgrading equipment and IT/OT systems. The Alberta retail market also needs to modernize to allow utilities to capitalize on new growth in energy transition opportunities. With that said, the risks of not responding to a changing electrical landscape at the correct time could result in stranded assets, a decline in revenue, loss of market share, and adverse impacts on electrical reliability.

As a result of these findings and to mitigate risks, a list of recommendations is proposed below:

- Leverage energy transition champions and clear ownership of executive priorities; identify stakeholders
- Increase communication to staff on strategy pillars, targeting adaptive culture change
- Continue to seek clarity with cross-functional internal and external stakeholders; clarify oversight/ reporting, and increase understanding about how energy transition applies to each functional area
- Create a central data repository and working space for anything pertaining to energy transition
- Foster greater company-wide understanding on regulatory revenue streams and potential revenue opportunities
- Establish a working or employee resource group meeting quarterly to facilitate greater collaboration and knowledge sharing between groups:
 - Identify new models, value frameworks, and alternate capital sources for grid modernization/hardening
 - Clarify misalignment on what challenges could be for various groups, i.e. in-house inverter knowledge
 - Create deeper customer electrification understanding, demystify actual consumer electrification uptake, find retail opportunity
 - Share knowledge and data

With every new challenge comes new business opportunities. Many other utilities have started to capitalize on consumer desire to have greater control over their electricity usage and generation. With proper foresight, action, and planning, we can optimize gains for an electrifying new future.

WISE PLANET TEAM



DR. LALEH BEHJAT

Laleh Behjat, PhD, is a professor at the University of Calgary and the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Prairies). She is an advocate for women in science and engineering and is passionate about removing systematic barriers to their advancement. Dr. Behjat received several awards including the 2015 Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA) Women in Engineering Champion Award and the 2017 ASTech Leadership Excellence in Science and Technology Public Awareness Award.



JENNIFER VAN ZELM

Jennifer van Zelm has a master's in electrical engineering and has worked the last 20 years in strategy, advisory and leadership roles related to tech and innovation. Her experience includes working at a not-for-profit ICT research consortium, contracting for the Schulich School of Engineering to launch its diversity strategies, and being CEO of an e-health start-up. She is currently performing program management, network outreach and content development for WISE Planet.



DR. STACIA THOMPSON MCCOY

Stacia McCoy earned her PhD in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Engineering and Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon University and her BSE in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Princeton University. Her experience includes microbial laboratory research to assess drinking water quality standards and consulting for the UNESCO Engineering Initiative to develop policy recommendations to address barriers for women engineers. She currently serves as the Program Developer for the WISE Planet program.



ERIKA LIEU

Erika Lieu is a PhD student of the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at the University of Calgary, and former management consultant and leader in the engineering sector. Her research interests are rooted in equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. Currently, Erika's research focuses on neurodiverse team functioning, specifically, supportive team leader and team member behaviours that maximize autistic team member performance. On a personal level, Erika's experiences have been at the intersection of race, gender, and disability. Further, her research and work experience include team conflict, multi-team systems, leadership, and strategic planning.



DR. LORENA SOLIS

Lorena Solis is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at the University of Connecticut. She received her PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Calgary. Her research interest is in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), specifically focusing on understanding how inequality manifests in hiring, retention, and career advancement practices for historically marginalized groups.



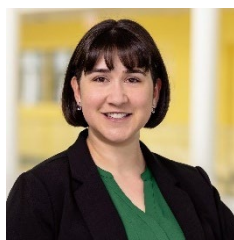
KIMBERLY TAYLOR

Kimberly Taylor is a first year I/O Psychology MSc student at the University of Calgary. Her research interests are in EDIA, with a current focus on the experiences of working fathers using a feminist lens. Her research and work experience include developing and piloting a wellness intervention proposal to reduce burnout by increasing cultural humility in therapists working with immigrants, developing a survey to measure maternal confidence, daily experience sampling of ongoing thought, and assisting with a systematic review of the organizational health psychology of Indigenous individuals.



ALISON BARRETT

Alison Barrett has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Victoria. As the Manager of Community and Social Impact at the Schulich School of Engineering, Alison is passionate about fostering an inclusive space in engineering for students, staff, and faculty. In particular, Alison enjoys working with current and prospective students to help inspire the next generation of change leaders in engineering.



DR. EMILY MARASCO

Emily Marasco is the Schulich Associate Dean – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility and the SSE Teaching Chair in Engineering Education Innovation – Digital Transformation. She is an active science communicator and outreach speaker in the local education community. She has been recognized as the 2018 ASTech Outstanding Leader of Tomorrow, and as one of Calgary's 2019 Top 40 Under 40 recipients.



CRAIG MELTON

Craig Melton is Director of Development for the Schulich School of Engineering at the University of Calgary. In this role he engages alumni, corporations and foundations in order to encourage community partnerships and philanthropic support to enhance research and broaden student learning opportunities. Prior to joining the University of Calgary, Craig enjoyed a career in the Calgary energy industry as a Business Development professional for a local geophysical company. In the community, he volunteers his time and talent through roles with Inn from the Cold, YWCA, Alberta Cancer Foundation and as a head coach with community basketball.

ADVISORY BOARD

The WISE Planet Advisory Board helps shape and strengthen our program. Comprised of dedicated volunteers from across the Prairies, our advisory board brings diverse expertise, mentorship, and guidance to support WISE Planet's mission.



MATINA KALCOUNIS-RUEPPELL

University of Alberta, College of Natural and Applied Sciences
College Dean and Vice Provost



NANNETTE HO-COVERNTON

The etc Foundation
Executive Director



COLIN JACKSON

The ATCO Group of Companies
Senior Vice President, Finance;
Treasury & Sustainability Chair, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council



JENNIFER MCRAE

ENMAX Power
Director, Project Services



JACQUELINE OTTMANN

First Nations University of Canada
President



MALINDA SMITH

University of Calgary
Associate Vice President Research | Inclusive Research Excellence



QIAO SUN

Schulich School of Engineering
Professor and Head, Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering



JONATHAN WITHEY

Mount Royal University
Professor and Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology

IN MEMORY OF HEATHER HERRING

Heather Herring, a WISE Leader for WISE Planet since Cohort 1, passed away from cancer on July 30, 2025.



Heather's life and work reminded us that lasting change begins with everyday choices to show up, speak up, and make a difference where we are.

Heather Herring

Make it So Inc.

Nov 24, 1957 – Jul 30, 2025

Big change happens one small act at a time

Heather was widely respected for her technical brilliance, enthusiasm and leadership on many fronts across the Calgary technical community. We remember her equally for how she supported others, often on a personal level—consistently, thoughtfully, and without needing recognition. She showed those around her that impact isn't only limited to people with titles or influence; it can grow through small, steady steps: a conversation, an introduction, a check-in, encouragement, sharing a resource, volunteering time. She did all these things regularly to lift-up people she met – especially women in STEM.

We will remember Heather for her generosity, kindness, and unwavering belief that each of us can and should help build a better world. We call on the WISE Planet community to learn from her example: when someone reaches out for help - make those introductions, have that coffee, provide some advice. We all have something to offer, and the littlest actions can build meaningful momentum and confidence in others.



*“You may not control all the events that happen to you,
but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”*
— **Maya Angelou**, Letter to My Daughter

Cohort 5 Books – Change Leadership Program Reading List

*Systems change requires shared work across differences.
Equity asks more than coping; it asks redesign.*
— **Adam Kahane**, Transformative Scenario Planning

*“Such is the power of the default male.”
“Neutral” systems often reflect who they were built around.
Inclusion starts with noticing who is missing from the evidence.*
— **Caroline Criado Perez**, Invisible Women

*“Believe in truth. To abandon facts is to abandon freedom.”
“Courage is contagious; the first person to dissent makes it easier for others.”*
— **Timothy Snyder**, On Tyranny

*A just future challenges the myth that “more” is always better.
The point isn’t less life—it’s less waste, less extraction, and more dignity.
Endless growth pressures people and planet—equity needs limits on excess.*
— **Jason Hickel**, Less is More

Change is ~~hard~~ *COMING*

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