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How women hold the key to potential gains

BY SANDY GAROSSINO

Andrew Leach, Angela Adams, Stephanie Cairns, Linda Coady, Gordon Lambert. Hardly any of these are household names, though they made oilfield history in Alberta in 2015.

Leach of course is one of Canada's most eminent energy economists, and Coady is former VP at **Weyerhaeuser** in Vancouver. Today she is VP Sustainability for **Enbridge** in Calgary, while Lambert holds the parallel post at **Suncor**. Adams and Cairns represent First Nations and environmental interests respectively.

What's distinctive about this group, as you may have guessed, is that they formed the Alberta government's Climate Change Advisory Panel, which developed the framework from which the province's new climate strategy emerged.

That strategy, announced last November, unlocked new potential for Canada on the world stage at the Paris Climate Summit.



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Significantly, Premier **Rachel Notley** secured the support of Alberta oil giants **F. Murray Edwards**, chairman of **Canadian Natural Resources** and **Steve Williams**, CEO of **Suncor**.

Yet take a closer look at that original Alberta panel — 60 per cent women. Business leaders looking for solutions should take note of this secret ingredient.

For virtually all of recorded history the Alberta oil industry and environmental interests wouldn't darken each other's doorsteps.

Supported by a strongly industry-focused government over the last nine years in Ottawa, the oil industry adopted a hostile posture with the environmental community, which returned the favour.

And vice versa.

The relentless head-butting resulted in exactly 0 new kilometres of pipelines built, hardening opposition and an ice-cold shoulder in Washington.

That Rachel Notley was able to bring not only Edwards and Williams but Indigenous and environmentalist interests to an agreement is due in no small part to the skill and preparation of the panel, and its unique ability to find the elusive Golden Mean. And, some would say, to the fact that women were there in numbers.

Enbridge's Linda Coady would know — she's seen and done it all before. In many ways her entire career path prepared her for this moment, to bring together deeply entrenched adversaries and find the way to Yes.

The former Weyerhaeuser ex-

ecutive supporting then-CEO **Anne Giardini**, is widely credited as a key player in the early "peace negotiations" between the forestry sector, First Nations and environmentalists. Hard as it is to imagine today, there was a time when things in B.C.'s forests were possibly even worse than what the energy sector faces now.

With painstaking care, Coady (among others) facilitated agreements to protect the Great Bear Rainforest, which subsequently developed into an eco-based management (EBM) plan for coastal forest management, bringing peace and stability to the sector.

Nor was Coady the only woman involved. **Jody Holmes** from the environmental community and several others were also instrumental to reaching an agreement.

Holmes recently recounted for *The Globe and Mail* how the ice melted between forestry industry and environmentalist representatives as they danced together at an **Elton John** concert.

Women know this stuff works,

because it's pretty simple. It's all about relationships. So it's no coincidence to find tough, smart, experienced women at the heart of two of the most significant resource industry and environmental accords in Western Canadian history.

In the current environment it's impossible to say how events will ultimately play out for Canadian industry. Yet even now preparations are under way for a White House state dinner, and our star has risen immeasurably on the world stage.

As the future, with all its uncertainty and promise unfolds, let's remember the unique skills women executives can bring to resolving even the toughest problems.

And don't shoot the piano player!

Sandy Garossino is a former Crown prosecutor. She currently writes a weekly column as legal analyst and contributing editor for the National Observer. She also sits on the Women's Leadership Circle Advisory Committee. Learn more at boardoftrade.com/WLC.



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