

# Women and the Montana Economy

May 2003

A publication of the Center for Policy Analysis & Community Change

Written by Deborah Halliday, MPA

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Terry Kendrick and Judy Smith for their research and analysis; Julie Kucera for report lay-out; Sandra Marshall for research assistance; and Sarah King Cole for organizational assistance. Thanks also to the women who participated in focus groups and other women who shared their experiences and analyses with us. Our gratitude also to the Board and staff of the Women's Foundation of Montana, an endowed fund of The Montana Community Foundation, for their vision, leadership, and financial support for this product and for the *Women and the Montana Economy Summit*, held in Helena, Montana on May 22 – 23, 2003.

## Table of Contents & Report Sections

Section 1: Executive Summary.....	3
Section 2: Report Overview.....	5
Section 3: Why Care About Women and the Economy?.....	6
Section 4: Women as Workers.....	7
Provides an analysis of women as professional workers, low-wage workers, working mothers, women active in Native American economies, and as decision makers. Provides approaches for improving women's economic well being in each of these areas.	
Section 5: How Are Women Faring?.....	17
Provides an overview of emerging job sectors: health care, technology, non-profit and government, and agriculture.	
Section 6: Getting From Here to There.....	21
Provides a policy framework to serve as a starting point for discussion and strategy during the <i>Women and the Montana Economy Summit</i> .	
Endnotes.....	23

# 1 Executive Summary

"The measure of a woman is what she does with power on behalf of other women."

*Kay Koplovitz*  
C200 Business Leader

One of the most challenging debates in our time is what to do with the state's faltering economy. The state fiscal crisis monopolized the 2003 State Legislature, as our economy continues to lag behind most states in terms of average wages and job growth. Missing from this conversation is the impact women as job creators and as waged workers, as advocates and as leaders play in the Montana economy. Mainstream economists do not have women on their radar screen, state labor data does not break out industries by gender in any meaningful way, and the Governor's *Roadmap for a New Economy* fails to mention women at all. It is the intent of this report, produced by the Center for Policy Analysis and Community Change, to better understand women's economic well being and to provide a framework for action.

The Center for Policy Analysis and Community Change is a project of Women's Opportunity and Resource Development, Inc (WORD). WORD, in its sixteenth year, envisions a world where women actively participate in decisions that affect our lives – societal, economic, political and environmental. CPACC applies tools of research, writing, advocacy and organizing to this vision, working with communities to fully realize these visions through united effort.

*Women and the Montana Economy* analyzes the challenges and the opportunities for women in the Montana economy. The report combines research and analysis with focus groups of women statewide active in policymaking, economic development, Native American economies, advocacy and business ownership. Through this approach, economic trends emerge as well as strategies for improving women's economic prospects.

This report was borne of a gathering of women's organizations that participated in a Women's Foundation of Montana-sponsored retreat in April 2002 at Chico Hot Springs. During the retreat, participants voiced a need to gain knowledge and advocacy skills in the arena of women and the economy, to better assist women out of poverty and life-limiting situations. CPACC agreed to provide the analysis and skills building requested.

The following findings emerged from this analysis:

- Montana's women-owned businesses are growing at one of the fastest rates in the nation; and Montana experienced the fastest growth in the number of minority-owned firms in the nation from 1997 – 2002<sup>1</sup>

- Low-wage jobs in retail and sales dominate job growth in the state, and women are disproportionately represented in these industries
- The state budget shortfall disproportionately impacts women as recipients of services and as employees of non-profit organizations and the government
- While women have made significant advances in leadership roles in their communities, women are still underrepresented in elected and appointed offices in government and in the workplace

To improve the economic well being of women in Montana, the following actions and strategies need to be explored:

- **Legislative Solutions** including raising the minimum wage; increasing funding for on-the-job training; and ensuring welfare recipients receive work credit for post secondary education and job training.
- **Community Building** including ensuring representation of women in key decisions affecting their lives; developing a statewide mentoring program; and increasing networking opportunities for women.
- **Economic Opportunities for Women** including increasing access to capital for women and Native American-owned businesses; expanding loan pools for women-owned technology ventures; and developing financial literacy curriculum for girls.
- **Workplace Progress** including offering employer incentives for family friendly policies; expanding the Family Medical Leave Act to include paid leave; and increasing access to childcare at small employers.
- **Reestablishing the Montana Women's Bureau** to explore small business pooling for health insurance and benefits; collect and analyze data on women's economic health; and serve as a resource for policy development and support.

It is the intent of the report to highlight the areas in which efforts are needed to improve economic opportunities for women. As such, it is a companion piece to the *Women and the Montana Economy Summit*, held in Helena, Montana on May 22 – 23, 2003. Participants from economic development, Native American economies, non-profit and governmental organizations, and advocates will convene at the Summit to explore these issues and to develop concrete paths and platforms for change.

# 2 Women and the Montana Economy: *Report Overview*

Missing from discussions of the state's economy is women: how are we faring? What will it take for us to succeed?

As in most states in the nation undergoing financial crises, there is much conversation in Montana about what to do with the state's ailing economy. The statistics on our economy are oft-cited and bleak: Montana ranks at the bottom of the nation in terms of average wages, Montana's workers make \$0.69 to the dollar of the national average, and job growth continues to be centered on low-paying retail and sales industries. The well-paying, extraction industry jobs (mining and timber) are being replaced with low-paying, scant-benefits jobs fueled by tourism and retirees.

Missing from this conversation is an analysis of where women are in the economy: how are we faring? What will it take for us to succeed? Of the sectors that show some growth, are women adequately represented? To what extent does Montana provide the support structure for women to succeed? Also missing from the conversation is an analysis of what women do well, and how these strengths can be magnified.

This report, *Women and the Montana Economy*, analyzes these questions, and proposes steps local and state communities can take to encourage women to succeed. The first section, *Why Care About Women and the Economy?* lays out an analysis of the transformative power of economic self-sufficiency, and the role women play in making that happen for themselves and for others. The second section, *Women as Workers*, analyzes the different roles women play in the economy – as professional workers, low-wage workers, working mothers, women active in Native American reservation economies and as decision makers – to better understand the strengths and the barriers women confront on the path to economic security. *How are Women Faring?* analyzes specific sectors – health care, technology, non-profit and government, and agriculture – as they relate to women. The final section, *Getting From Here to There* proposes policies and practices to transform this analysis into action.

*Women and the Montana Economy* is a companion piece to the *Women and the Montana Economy Summit*, held in Helena, Montana on May 22 – 23, 2003. Participants from economic development, Native American economies, non-profit and governmental organizations, and advocates will convene to explore these issues and to develop concrete paths and platforms for change.

# 3 Why Care About Women and the Economy?

When we talk of the uninsured, underemployed, children in poverty and strapped educational systems, the invisible majority impacted are women.

Women make up a slight majority of the population, but are they much different than their male counterparts? Don't all workers – regardless of gender – seek economic opportunities, time with family, fair treatment, and opportunities for improving their lives? The answer is, of course, yes. Yet, just as this is so, women face unique, systemic challenges to their ability to thrive and prosper. Consider these facts:

- Women are disproportionately represented in the low-wage jobs that dominate job growth in the state (retail trade and sales)
- Montanan women are paid \$0.58 cents for every \$1.00 a man earns, giving Montana one of the largest wage gaps in the country
- Lack of access to financial resources, or a foreseeable opportunity to improve one's economic situation, is the number one barrier to women reporting or leaving domestic violence situations
- With poverty rates for children in Montana ranking the second highest in the nation, and mothers being paid poverty wages for work, we are creating a new generation of Montanans born into poverty with little prospects for prosperity

Poverty is a crippling condition. Poverty is the primary determinant of one's health and life expectancy – overshadowing family history, race and living habits. Women are disproportionately poor in our country. When we talk of the uninsured, the underemployed, children in poverty and strapped educational systems, women are the invisible majority – over represented in classes of citizens struggling without resources and with limited recourse.

When women gain access to a good-paying job, capital, ownership of a business or firm, or a quality education, our perceptions of who we are and how we can move through the world changes. Women who are leaders change systems that limit women's opportunities. It is not merely a just society – but a wise one as well – that seeks to promote the talents and strengths of all its citizens. A key component to any diverse, strong economic agenda must address the promotion of women's efforts and abilities.

When women gain access to resources, the catalytic effect of gaining a sense of economic security is necessarily tempered by the realities of a society that does not provide supportive environments or adequate opportunities for advancement. The purpose of this report is, in part, to highlight the need for communities to do more.

# 4

## Women as Workers

Rachel Campbell, owner of Rachel's Furniture Gallery in Great Falls, is the US Small Business Administration 2003 Montana Young Entrepreneur of the Year!

Women play many roles in the economy – as primary breadwinners, job creators, policy makers, and as poorly paid employees. The extent to which women are thriving in these roles, and the interrelationship of women and society regarding these roles, is explored in this next section. The section analyzes the different roles women play in the economy – as professional workers, low-wage workers, working mothers, women active in Native American economies, and as decision makers.

This section finds:

- Montana's emerging urban economies offer new avenues for women to succeed in higher wage industries such as finance, insurance and legal services
- Montana's women-owned businesses are growing at one of the fastest rates in the nation; and Montana experienced the fastest growth in the number of minority-owned firms in the nation from 1997 – 2002<sup>2</sup>
- Women's approach to economic development – customer-responsive, holistic, and supportive of economic infrastructure – positions women to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy
- Women are disproportionately represented in low-wage work
- Native American women are leading tribal efforts to revitalize reservation economies
- While women have made significant advances in leadership roles in their communities, women are still underrepresented in elected and appointed offices in government and in the workplace

### Women as Professional Workers

The term professional workers is used loosely in this section, to encompass women working in white collar jobs, women-owned businesses, and economic development officers. When analyzing the state's economy, economist Larry Swanson identifies two economies – those with central cities and their surrounding region, and those unaffected by urban activity. Swanson finds promising trends in the state's urban economies – a rise in professional services, such as law, insurance, accounting, engineering and ancillary services.<sup>3</sup> These jobs can pay a decent wage, and are growing in number in the state.

This bodes well for women. In simple economies, new business ventures either require substantial amounts of capital and/or physical labor to succeed.

In complex economies, women have more opportunity to start small and establish niche markets.

In more complex economies – such as can develop in urbanized environments – women have more opportunities to start small and to establish niche markets. Since access to capital is a chronic challenge for women-owned enterprises, being able to start small with limited up-front cash is key.

State economic data is not organized by gender in any useful fashion, making it difficult to assess the participation rates of women in law, insurance, accounting, and engineering. Researchers looked instead to professional associations and 1990 Equal Opportunity Employment data (the most recent data available through the US Census Bureau). This research found women's participation rates vary by professional field:

- 40 percent of the people who recently passed the Montana Bar Exam are women, indicating strong participation rates of women in law<sup>4</sup>
- Women comprise 55 percent of accountants and auditors in the state<sup>5</sup>
- Women comprise a scant 3 percent of the engineers in the state<sup>6</sup>

At the national level, women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men. Montana is one of the top 10 states for fastest growth in women-owned firms, increasing their employment by 49 percent and their sales by an impressive 78 percent.<sup>7</sup> Women own 33.2 percent of Montana's firms, employ over 33,000 people and have sales exceeding \$3.6 billion.<sup>8</sup> Montana's economy is dominated by small businesses – 62 percent of Montana firms have four or fewer employees.<sup>9</sup> Mirroring state trends, Montana's women-owned firms tend to be small – only 19 percent have employees.

The majority of women-owned businesses (55 percent) are in the low-wage sales industry, and retail is a distant second at 18 percent.<sup>10</sup> Women-owned businesses are most in need of capital to establish or expand their businesses – research shows that credit cards are the top form of financing for women-owned businesses in the nation. Montana's Small Business Administration has made efforts to increase lending to women-owned businesses – reaching a high of 22 percent of their loan pool to women-owned businesses in FY99, down to 15 percent of the loan pool in FY02.<sup>11</sup>

As Montana witnesses women starting their own businesses at such high rates with limited capital, it is tempting to imagine their success rates with increased access to capital and business infrastructure.

### *Spokane Creek Nursery*

*Lana Zigan, owner of Helena-based Spokane Creek Nursery, started her gardening career at a Shopko nursery, where under her management the nursery had the biggest sales of Shopko nurseries in the nation. Lana worked with the local SBDC to write a business plan and obtained start-up funds through the Native American Development Corporation in Billings. "I wanted to own a home business so I could keep my family together," says the*

*mother of four children she homeschools. Her entire family is involved with the business. Lana's biggest challenge, echoing sentiments shared by many women entrepreneurs, is the need for capital to purchase inventory. "I've been in the business for three years," says Lana. "The first year was building the greenhouses – this year I'm doubling their size." Lana's goal is to develop a good customer service reputation so people will purchase their nursery goods from her rather than from "big box stores". While she acknowledges there is some prejudice against Native American women business owners, she believes that most people who are serious gardeners acknowledge her expertise, and come back for more.*

"It's still an old boys network in this state. You can have been around a long time, and still come up against a brick wall."

*- Focus Group Participant*

Women bring a strength and vibrancy to economic development that positions them to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy. It is a dynamic that one focus group participant dubbed "economic gathering versus economic hunting". This phenomenon describes women's approach to business. Women tend to:

- Cultivate and deepen customer relations, rather than look for the next big sale
- Value "economic infrastructure" of education, ongoing and on-the-job training, and mentoring
- View their work in the context of community and family balances

Economic development officers participating in focus group conversations agreed. EDOs are often the local backbone of government's attempt to encourage a vibrant economy. Local officers have discretion to develop programs to meet their community's needs, and are often the conduit for state and federal funding sources. Yet there still remains a culture in the economic development field which makes some women feel unwelcome. In one focus group conversation, a female economic development officer said, "It's still an old boys network in this state. You can have been around here for a long time, and still come up against a brick wall." The other women in the room nodded in understanding.

### *Professional Workers: Where to go from here*

Professional workers identified four initiatives needed:

- **Improve access to capital** "Women led firms will be able to grow and thrive when access to capital and financial networks is more equitable. Women-led businesses are still being shut out of the critical funding circles that they need to gain entrée to in order to expand," observes a Chairman and CEO of an out-of-state firm.<sup>12</sup>

"The pink collar ghetto is a residue of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century ideal: the male-breadwinner family."<sup>13</sup>

Alice Kessler- Harris  
Historian

- **Encourage more mentoring opportunities** "Typically women do not have the same access as men to mentors who can counsel them on how to create a new business and sell the idea to funders," says a managing partner of a financing group outside of Montana. "We all need to be alert to opportunities to mentor or find mentors for women."<sup>14</sup>
- **Enhance lifelong education** Many women business owners participating in our focus groups are pursuing advanced degrees in accounting, business, and other fields to feel better equipped to run and expand their businesses. Some of these women are pursuing them on-line.
- **Create networking opportunities for women** The majority of Summit registrants expressed hopes to networking during the Summit, reflecting a desired to break the geographic and gender isolation of doing business in Montana.

### Women as Low-Wage Workers

Although much is said about Montana's preponderance of low-wage service sector, retail trade and tourism-related jobs, the little known fact is that women comprise the majority of workers in these fields. Labeled the "pink collar ghetto," these jobs are largely poorly paid, absent benefits, and offer little opportunity for advancement. The preponderance of these jobs require little to no credentialing, and exist in small businesses with low profit margins, making efforts to improve the working conditions on the job – increased pay, better benefits – difficult to achieve. Consider these facts:

- Seven out of every ten Montana working women earns less than \$20,000 a year<sup>15</sup>
- Nationally, women who work these jobs are struggling to support their families on one income. There's no indication that Montana varies from this trend: Montana ranks second in the nation for the percentage of children living in poverty<sup>16</sup>
- Nationally, 90 percent of those who work in private households are women; 70 percent of women workers are tracked in low-wage work<sup>17</sup>

Why is it that women are so likely to be tracked into low-wage jobs? From a historical perspective, these jobs – waitress, home health aide, nanny, laundry worker and hotel cleaner – are care giving jobs, jobs that traditionally occurred inside one's home as *unpaid* work. (When's the last time you were compensated for picking up your kids' socks or cooking a nice meal?) As women moved into the workforce, women were thought to be naturally inclined to these care giving jobs, which, in turn, maintained the social order of women tending and men leading.

More recently, research has shown that high schools continue to track girls into low-wage job preparation, and boys into higher wage job preparation.

Nationally, 1 out of 3 women work part-time, reflecting their need and/or desire to be available for home-based responsibilities.

Women graduating from college are less likely than men to graduate in computer science, engineering or mathematics (higher wage industries) and are more likely to graduate with degrees in education and social work.<sup>18</sup> The median wage for a woman with a bachelor's degree in 1998 was \$15,000 less than for a man similarly educated.<sup>19</sup>

Women's role as breadwinner and caretaker in the home also limits women's economic mobility. Nationally, 1 out of 3 working women work part-time, reflecting their need and/or desire to be available for home-based responsibilities. This has two impacts on women: in the short run, women earn less because they are both putting in less hours and are likely to seek employment that is amenable to part-time employment (that is low-wage in nature). In the long run, women's lifetime of earnings are low, impacting social security benefits – older American's major firewall between poverty and comfort.<sup>20</sup>

### *Low-Wage Workers: Where to Go From Here*

How can we think about the future of low-wage work for Montana's women? Two competing approaches, both equally feminist, vie for attention.<sup>21</sup> One is to continue efforts to get women out of low paying jobs and into higher wage, "men's work." Affirmative action efforts, non-traditional job training and recruitment efforts to enroll women in the math and sciences can create more space for women to become construction workers, electricians, and computer programmers. This strategy realigns the relationship between men and women on the job site and – given the long hours these jobs require – brings into question roles in home life. Despite these tensions, this approach offers an opportunity for women to gain an economic independence not feasible in the pink collar ghetto.

The second approach is to try to improve the life circumstances of women tracked into low-wage work. This can take the form of advocating for better pay, the availability of health care benefits and pensions, subsidized childcare, increased job security and more humane work environments. Locating the leverage points for creating this change is difficult in our current political climate of little governmental regulation and harsh treatment of low-income people – especially low-income women.<sup>22</sup>

Nationally, an increasing number of women are turning to unions to improve their working conditions. In the 1990s, women constituted the majority of newly organized workers, winning union recognition among the cleaners in Los Angeles and nursing home and home health aides in northern California.<sup>23</sup> Unionized women workers make an average of 30 percent more in wages and benefits than do workers performing the same duties in non-union shops. Opportunities for advancement, better pay, more generous benefits and more human working conditions are oft-cited reasons women are helping to organize in their workplaces.

Despite the barriers – both cultural and regulatory – to helping women escape the pink collar ghetto, efforts continue to improve women’s standards of living. These efforts include:

- **Promoting non-traditional training and post-secondary education** opportunities for women, including pressuring colleges to create flexible enrollment policies and providing childcare on campus.
- **Increasing leadership opportunities for women in unions**
- **Fighting for adequate childcare benefits** Women cannot in good conscience seek out and keep good employment without adequate care for their children.
- **Keeping post secondary education and job training as components of welfare reform** Montana is one of the few states in the nation that allows women to gain skills as they work their way off welfare.
- **Ensuring women have housing they can afford** Unstable housing – paying too much for housing or having to change homes frequently – negatively impacts children’ performance in school, family health, and a worker’s ability to find and maintain employment.

## Women as Working Mothers

In a recent poll of working women conducted by the Center for Policy Alternatives, the biggest concern expressed by women was balancing work and family life.<sup>24</sup> Consider these facts:

- In Montana, 65 percent of children under six have both parents working – compared to 59 percent nationally<sup>25</sup>
- Nationally, nearly three-fourths of mothers with children now work for pay. There is no indication that working mothers in Montana work less frequently for pay<sup>26</sup>

Working mothers pay a price, in lower income and increased stress, as they try to balance the demands of workplace and home. Wanting to spend time with family adversely affects men and women, but women pay a higher price than do men – even those who are highly educated – because women tend to have more family responsibilities. Salaries for women who have children average 8 to 10 percent less than those of men who have children, with education being equal.<sup>27</sup> This is due in part to women being stereotyped at the workplace as being less committed to work and likely to leave to start a family, and therefore are given less responsibility and less pay. When women do choose to have a family and continue work, this negative stereotype persists, making it difficult and less rewarding – financially and morally – for women to try to balance their roles as worker and caregiver.

Women are also the primary providers of care for aging parents – nearly three-quarters of those providing unpaid care giving to seniors are women. The typical caregiver is a married woman in her mid-forties. She is employed full-time and spends an average of 18 hours a week providing care to an aging relative.<sup>29</sup> Almost one-quarter of American households provide care to friends or relatives age 50 or older.<sup>30</sup>

### *Working Mothers: Where to Go From Here*

Much of the discussion of alleviating the burden of women who work and provide care to children or the elderly centers on the need for cultural changes in society, and for workplace changes, referred to as “family friendly” policies or “work/life balance”. While women and men have achieved more parity on household obligations, women still bear the majority of responsibilities in a household, including cleaning, care giving, paying bills and managing the family’s health care. Until this inequity is mitigated, women will continue to suffer consequences in the workplace – including lower wages, less decision making power in the workplace, and greater likelihood of being tracked into part-time work.

Many countries have family friendly policies that make the United States’ policies pale in comparison. They include:<sup>31</sup>

- **In Japan**, women have one-year paid maternity leave at 40 percent of their annual salaries
- **In Sweden**, parents can request a six-hour work day until their youngest child is six years old
- **In Italy**, parents may use parental leave to reduce hours on the job following the birth of a child

While the United States has the Family Medical Leave Act, it is short on benefits (leave is uncompensated), and – most importantly for a state like Montana – only applies to businesses with 50 employees or more, a scant percentage of Montana businesses.

Another approach is to encourage family friendly workplace policies. These include flexible hours, allowing employees to bring their children to work, working from home, and job sharing. While many of these policies are found in larger firms, some smaller businesses and non-profit organizations in Montana have made efforts to increase their family-friendly policies.<sup>32</sup> As the national economy restricts, however, some human resource experts fear that the strides some companies have made toward granting these kinds of employee benefits are slowing or retracting.

“Until men take on close to an equal role at home, the pattern [of pay disparity] will continue.”<sup>28</sup>

*Anne E. Preston*  
Labor Economist

## Native American Working Women

Generational poverty and unemployment plague much of reservation life, yet for a growing number of women, economic development opportunities are emerging. Focus group conversations with Native American women active in economic development on the reservations paint a portrait of momentum and vitality little heralded off the reservation.<sup>33</sup> Consider the following facts:

- Unemployment 76 percent on Rocky Boy; poverty rates on the reservations exceed 45 percent on five of the seven Montana reservations<sup>34</sup>
- In many tribes, Native American women are the economic development officers – leading their community’s economic efforts
- Montana ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for growth in the number of Native American women-owned businesses and 7<sup>th</sup> in sales growth; they comprise 8 percent of women-owned businesses in the state<sup>35</sup>

“Native American women understand that the dollar a woman brings home has to extend to the whole family – it makes us creative and it makes us the best negotiators.”

*Luanne Belcourt*  
Rocky Boy

This section analyzes economic development activity on the reservations – despite the fact that over 50 percent of Montana’s Native Americans live off the reservation. This is done in part because urban Indian activists informed researchers that many of the challenges urban Indians face – over representation in low-wage, a lack of affordable housing and few job training opportunities – are reflective of the challenges of all poor people.

Job growth on the reservations varies – the Flathead sees growth in manufacturing and retail; Rocky Boy in people starting their own businesses and construction; and on the Crow reservation there is not much job growth happening. Of the three reservations, only the Flathead – home to S & K Technology, which provides information technology to the Department of Defense, NASA, and others – has high wage jobs available.

Conversations with focus group participants lead to an exciting aspect of Native American women as economic development officers. All the women talked of an approach to business development that is holistic. They believe that for a business to succeed, the person and the business need a supportive environment. Reservation businesses are also finding ways to overcome the geographic isolation of Montana and the cultural differences among tribes to collaborate with one another. Artisan cooperatives – bead making and leather goods – are an emerging reservation industry that is reflective of the emphasis on collaboration and a holistic approach.

### *Little Rocky Stop*

*Marlene Werk – a member of the Grosvant Tribe on the Ft. Belknap reservation – owns the Little Rocky Stop, a small grocery store and snack bar started by her parents 13 years ago. Soon after it started, Marlene’s father got sick, and Marlene has been running the store ever since. She used her savings to double the size of the business, and gross sales went from \$100,000*

*to \$700,000. Her biggest challenges are financing – lenders don't want to loan money on land owned by the tribal trust – and finding steady help. Marlene works nearly everyday. Marlene raised two boys while working at the store; when she needs a break, her mother or sister lend a helping hand. She serves a population of about 1,500, and sees a need to capture more of the highway tourism to grow her business further.*

The barriers women confront in economic development efforts on the reservations include ongoing male chauvinism, as women break out of traditional roles and cultural norms to be business owners. As with other working mothers, access to childcare is an ongoing concern – there is only one childcare center on the whole of the Rocky Boy reservation. Access to capital to start and grow businesses – a challenge for most of Montana's businesses – is doubly a challenge for Native American women, who must combat racism and lenders' discomfort with lending to reservation-based businesses.

### *Native American Working Women: Where to Go From Here*

Despite these barriers, Native American women point to promising approaches to economic development that give them a sense of moving forward in their work. These include:

- **Access to capital** Native First Accounts – an Individual Development Account program sponsored by Fannie Mae and First Nations – is a cash matching savings account program that encourages Native Americans to save money towards starting a new business, owning a home or pursuing educational opportunities.
- **Increase networks of Native American economic developers** Breaking down the geographic and cultural isolation of being Native American women and business leaders – through mentoring, and by continuing the good work of existing collaborations will help to deepen the capacity of reservation economic development efforts.
- **Government contracts** Although the paperwork and bureaucracy can be extreme, there are programs and contracts that Native American business owners can pursue for assistance.

## Women as Decision Makers

When women gain access to a good-paying job, are elected to political office or serve on an association board, our perceptions of who we are and how we can move through the world changes. Women who are leaders can change systems that limit women's chances for success. Women bring unique perspectives to the work of government, business and community. It is a goal of those seeking better economic opportunities for women to see women represented in leadership positions. Consider the following facts:

*Women legislators are nearly 3 times as likely to work on issues related to children and family.*

- Women represent 24 percent of state legislators, including four Native American women<sup>36</sup>
- It matters how many women are in our legislative bodies for the simple reason that women legislators give top priority to women's rights policies by a margin of 2 to 1.
- Women are nearly three times as likely to work on issues related to children and families than are male legislators.<sup>37</sup>

In the workplace, research shows that women leave senior leadership positions in companies at significantly higher rates than men.<sup>38</sup> The research finds that – though these women have achieved leadership roles in their businesses – they often see no future in the company, largely because of the persistence of the “glass ceiling,” a dearth of role models and minimal mentoring. Most of these women say they would rather be working than at home – provided their companies offered real paths for career advancement.

## *Women as Decision Makers: Where to Go From Here*

While women have made significant strides in leadership roles in their communities, women are still underrepresented in decisions that affect their lives. Encouraging women into leadership roles can be achieved through the following approaches:

- **Conduct women's campaign schools** to provide women the information and skills they need to run for elected office.
- **Encourage mentoring opportunities** to help women into leadership positions, and to help them succeed once they are in leadership roles.
- **Encourage trade associations** to develop initiatives to invite more women into leadership roles within associations – especially associations that have a substantial number of female members.

# 5 How Are Women Faring?

This next section analyzes specific job sectors and asks the question – *How are women faring?* Are women adequately represented in these fields? In job sectors with high wage and low-wage job tracks, are women disproportionately represented in the lower paid jobs? In both successes and in the places we need to work to improve women’s economic opportunities, what can be done?

The job sectors analyzed in this section are health care, technology, non-profit and government, and agriculture. These sectors were chosen because they either represent a core industry in Montana, or are seen as vital to the growth of the state’s economy. In each of these sections, researchers were hindered by the fact that state economic data is not organized to reveal participation rates or trends by gender in any useful fashion. Researchers relied on focus group participants and national data to better understand these trends in Montana. Improved gathering and analysis of gender-specific data is clearly needed to best understand how women are faring in these emerging sectors of the economy.

## Women in Health Care

The health care industry is one of western Montana’s strongest economic indicators – the growth of this industry was credited for the majority of the Missoula-area growth in the 1990s.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, at the national level, one-half of the jobs projected to grow the fastest in this decade are in human health care.<sup>40</sup> But just because a job is in high demand does not mean it is high wage. Some of the hottest jobs – home health aides, for example – pay the lowest salaries, and are over represented by women. Nursing is a field that has traditionally drawn a lot of women, and pays a good salary. The national shortage of nurses has not, however, led to higher wages and increased benefits, but has rather resulted in the shifting of responsibilities to lower-qualified and lower-paid health care workers.

State economic data is not organized by gender in any useful fashion, so it is difficult to estimate the number of women who are working higher wage health care jobs, such as doctors, specialists and technicians. One area of health care that shows promise for women is in alternative medicines – naturopathy, fitness, yoga, acupuncture and wellness. These businesses are largely owned by and employ women. Increasingly, in many Montana towns large and small, one can see a Main Street shingle advertising yoga and wellness services.

“Role models and mentors are key to engaging women in science [and technology].”<sup>41</sup>

*Sara Lee Schupf*  
Advocate

## Women in Technology

As Montana tries to invigorate its economy to become more competitive in a global arena, technology is often cited as key to increasing productivity and creating better paying jobs. Nationally, technology jobs pay 73 percent better than other jobs in the economy, and technology jobs represent one-third of the fastest growing jobs for this decade.<sup>42</sup> Montana has a small technology sector – representing only 1.8 percent of the economy’s jobs – yet those jobs pay an average of \$46,000 per year – almost twice the average wage in the state.<sup>43</sup>

Montana’s technology economy is dominated by services: computer and data processing, engineering and architectural, research and testing, and management and business consulting services.<sup>44</sup> State economic data does not organize industries by gender, so it is difficult to estimate the number of women who are working in technology, but a preliminary analysis of service technology revealed that women are well-represented in industries that have high-tech jobs, yet it is unclear if women are actually employed in those jobs, or are employed as supportive staff to those work functions. We do know that women comprise less than 15 percent of higher paying trade and technology jobs in the state.<sup>45</sup>

*Women and the Montana Economy* researchers met with Gallatin County-area women in technology to better understand the job opportunities and challenges women confront in this field of work. In addition, researchers spoke with Jakki Mohr, professor of Marketing at the University of Montana School of Business Administration. Mohr identified three emerging technology industries in Montana – health industry services, Geographic Information Systems, and biotechnology. Her sense is that women are still very much underrepresented in these fields, and advocates that we need to start much earlier in how we raise our daughters. “It’s important to get women into these fields now, but we really need to work at filling the pipeline for later years,” Mohr says.

In promoting women and girls into technology fields, research shows that women and girls excel in environments that encourage hands-on research, provide role models and mentors, connect science and technology to other fields and emphasizes “real world” applications.<sup>46</sup> By encouraging women who have already achieved some success in the world of technology to share their enthusiasm and leadership with other women and girls, we can promote greater participation from women into this important, emerging field.

## Women in Non-profit and Government

The non-profit sector is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest source of wages in Montana – paying over \$648 million in wages in 1998, outpacing agriculture, mining and construction in terms of wages paid.<sup>47</sup> Yet, as elsewhere in the economy, women in the non-profit sector earn less than do men, and a look at where women are nationally reveals that women are the chief executives at organizations with budgets less than \$500,000, and men hold 76 percent of those jobs at organizations with budgets over \$5 million.<sup>48</sup>

While we don't have data on the number of women working in the non-profit sector, we know that many of our women allies are in the non-profit economy, and that many of their efforts are focused on improving the lives of lower-income women and their children. Raising the wage on these jobs is much needed, although the current contraction of philanthropic funding makes that unlikely any time soon.

The state's budget crisis disproportionately impacts women as recipients of services and as providers of these services – in both government and in the non-profit sectors.

In terms of wages paid by employer, government is the second largest employment sector in the state, with an annual payroll just short of \$2 billion.<sup>49</sup> For many women, government is the employer of choice, because of longstanding practices of decent wages and equal opportunity employment law that creates job advancement opportunities for women. Women are well represented in Montana's governmental employment, ranging from health and human services employees to higher-skilled employment as lawyers, accountants and analysts.

The state's budget crisis resulted state legislators passing an estimated \$50 million cut in health and human services, a \$27 million cut in K-12 education, and a \$48 million cut from higher education.<sup>50</sup> These cuts to government programs threaten women in three different ways. As recipients of governmental services – from cash benefits and supportive services, to child protective services and childcare subsidies – women bear a disproportionate share of the impact of these cuts. As the majority of non-profit sector workers, women are being threatened with loss of jobs that budget cuts represent. (The State of Montana contracts with many non-profits to provide health and human services.) Governmental employees, too, are at risk of job loss, undermining one of the only paths to good paying, benefit-rich employment in the state.

## Women in Value-Added Agriculture

The importance of value-added agriculture grows every year. The farm value of agricultural products is far outweighed by the value of services, packaging and conveniences represented in value-added ag.<sup>51</sup> Examples of value-added ag businesses in Montana – not necessarily women-run – are: Amazing Grains Cooperative, which processes and markets a gluten-free Indian grass product; Flathead Native Agricultural Cooperative, which is developing Indian branded beef products; and Montana Eco-fuels, which processes Montanan oil seed crops into biodiesel additives.

Women have traditionally had limited access to the wealth of agricultural life: they have had limited access to land, credit, and technologies. The rise in value-added agriculture is changing that. Value-added agriculture requires less land and capital start-up funds, which enables women to establish niche markets for their goods and services. This is a shift from the traditional delineation of gender roles, which were that men owned the land, controlled the farming decisions and were recognized as farmers, while women were seen in limited roles as farm wives and helpers.<sup>52</sup>

Women are becoming farmers in their own right in increasing numbers, up from 6 percent in 1987 to 9 percent ten years later.<sup>53</sup> Mirroring this trend, women are emerging leaders in the value-added ag industry, which meets women's desire to build sustainable, holistic businesses with the products of our state.

### *13 Mile Ranch*

*Becky Weed and her husband own 13 Mile Ranch in Belgrade, a predator friendly wool and organic wool business. With little experience in ranching, the Weeds purchased a small ranch in 1993, and quickly realized they could not make enough money off regular commercial prices for lamb and wool because they didn't have enough land in which to raise the needed sheep. Their environmental values lead them to a different approach – they established a predator friendly agricultural business, selling wool and organic lamb under this certification. Predator friendly is a commitment to not poison or shoot or kill natural predators – they use llama to deter coyotes and dogs. They became certified organic in 1995, which helps them assure buyers who are willing to pay a higher price for meat that is organic. They started small and learned from their many mistakes, and have seen their business grow slowly but steadily. They are their only employees, but sometimes hire help in busy seasons. They see demand growing in Gallatin County, as well as elsewhere in the nation for products that are made and processed with sustainable, environmentally-friendly values.*

# 6

## Getting From Here to There

During the Summit, women will strategize specific steps we can take to improve the economic well being of all Montanan women.

The final section of this report provides the basis for discussion and strategy for participants of the *Women and the Montana Economy Summit* held in Helena on May 22 – 23, 2003. During the Summit, participants will strategize specific actions women can take together to improve the economic well being of all women in Montana. The following is a sample of actions and solutions Summit participants will explore. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to serve as a starting point for discussion and strategy.

### Legislative Solutions: Leveling the Playing Field

- Raise the minimum wage
- Create an Equal Pay Commission to close the wage gap
- Increase funding for on-the-job training
- Ensure welfare recipients receive work credit for post secondary education and workforce training activities
- Increase funding for schools and government services

### Community Building: Supporting our Sisters

- Ensure representation of women leaders in key decision making functions: electoral, workplace and community
- Develop a statewide mentoring program
- Hold local campaign schools
- Increase networking opportunities for women

### Economic Opportunities for Women

- Increase access to capital available for women & Native Americans
- Mentor women into high paying technology firms
- Develop financial literacy curriculum for girls
- Expand loan fund pools for women-owned technology ventures
- Expand non-traditional job training and worksite preparedness outreach

(Continued on the next page...)

## Workplace Progress

- Offer incentives to employers to provide family friendly policies: flexible hours, child-friendly work environments, job sharing, etc.
- Expand Family Medical Leave Act to include paid leave (National policy initiative)
- Increase access to childcare at small employers through public-private partnerships

## A Women's Bureau: Measuring our Successes

- Reestablish the Montana Women's Bureau
- Explore small business pooling for better health and pension benefits
- Collect and analyze data on women's economic health
- Watch dog gender-biased legislation
- Serve as a resource for policy development and support

This report, *Women and the Montana Economy* analyzes the challenges and the opportunities for women in the Montana economy. The report combines research and analysis with focus groups of women statewide active in policymaking, economic development, Native American economies, advocacy and business ownership. The report, a companion piece for the *Women and the Montana Economy Summit*, is intended to provide a framework for the important work of women who care about increasing the economic prosperity of all women in Montana. Through this process, it is believed that women will help to transform the health of Montana's economy, together.

## End Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> *Women-Owned Businesses in 2002: Trends in the U.S. and 50 States*, Center for Women's Business Research; and *Women of Color Lead the Pack*, Professional Women's Magazine, vol. 1 issue 1, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Swanson's analysis as presented by him at a Missoula Area Economic Development Corporation meeting on December 12, 2002. Mr. Swanson is an economist for the University of Montana-affiliated Center for the Rocky Mountain West.

<sup>4</sup> Montana State Bar Association, [www.montanabar.org](http://www.montanabar.org) Accessed 5/14/03.

<sup>5</sup> US Censuses Bureau, using the most recent data available, which is from the 1990 Equal Employment Opportunity File.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Center for Women's Business Research, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce.

<sup>11</sup> Montana Small Business Administration.

<sup>12</sup> S. Diane Graham, Chairman and CEO, STRATCO, Inc. *The C200 Business Leadership Index 2003: Annual Report on Women's Clout in Business*. The Committee of 200.

<sup>13</sup> Kessler-Harris, Alice. "Pink Collar Ghetto, Blue Collar Token." from *Sisterhood is Forever*, Morgan, Robin, ed. p. 359.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth L. Mathieu, Esq. Managing Partner, East Coast Capital IV Partners. *The C200 Business Leadership Index 2003: Annual Report on Women's Clout in Business*. The Committee of 200.

<sup>15</sup> Kendrick, Terry. *The Montana Women's Report*. Center for Policy Analysis and Community Change, December 2002.

<sup>16</sup> The Coalition of Human Needs; State Rankings 2002: a statistical view of the 50 United States.

<sup>17</sup> Kessler-Harris. p. 359.

<sup>18</sup> National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>19</sup> The Digest of Educational Statistics.

<sup>20</sup> Through Social Security, poverty among seniors has fallen to less than 10%, compared to 35% in the 1950s. Because women outlive men, women represent 58% of all senior beneficiaries, and 71% of beneficiaries over age 85. Totsi-Lane, Linda, et. Al. *Social Security is One of the Best Friends Women Have*, Economic Opportunity Institute. <http://www.econop.org> Accessed 11/11/02.

<sup>21</sup> The framing for this section benefited from Kessler-Harris. p. 365.

<sup>22</sup> The welfare reauthorization debate includes increasing work requirements for single parents from 20 to 40 hours a week, and rejects education and job training to count towards work requirements, in essence assuring low income women will be tracked into dead end jobs.

<sup>23</sup> Kessler-Harris. p. 364.

<sup>24</sup> *Women and the Economy – Women's Voices Polling 2002*. Center for Policy Alternatives.

<sup>25</sup> Children's Defense Fund.

<sup>26</sup> *EPI Journal*. Economic Policy Institute, Winter 2003. p.2 and conversation with Missoula-based Child Care Resources.

<sup>27</sup> Kleiman, Carol. *Wage-earning mothers remain in a bind over salary*. Missoulian, May 4, 2003. G1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Kendrick, Terry.

<sup>30</sup> Older Women's League.

<sup>31</sup> Klieman, Carol. *Global tour finds variety of work/life balance benefits*. Missoulian.

<sup>32</sup> Women's Opportunity and Resource Development, Inc. personnel policies allow for parents to bring their children to work, and for flex time. The City of Missoula periodically awards local businesses exhibiting family-friendly work policies.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews were conducted with Nancy Warneke, Flathead Reservation; Luanne Belcourt, Rocky Boy Reservation; and Velma Pretty on Top, Crow Reservation. CPACC appreciates their time and insights.

<sup>34</sup> Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

<sup>35</sup> Center for Women's Business Research, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Kendrick, p. 25.

- 
- <sup>37</sup> Center for Women in Politics, Rutgers University.
- <sup>38</sup> *Women's Research Network News* The Council for Research on Women. Spring 2002, p. 12.
- <sup>39</sup> University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 2000.
- <sup>40</sup> Norris, Kim. *This could be the decade for tech, health care jobs*. Missoulian, January 12, 2003. p. G1.
- <sup>41</sup> *Women's Research Network News*, p. 7.
- <sup>42</sup> *Roadmap for a New Economy*. The Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity, 2002; and Norris, Kim.
- <sup>43</sup> *Roadmap for a New Economy*.
- <sup>44</sup> *Montana Employment and Labor Force Trends, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2000*. Research and Analysis Bureau, Department of Labor and Industry.
- <sup>45</sup> Kendrick, p. 22.
- <sup>46</sup> *Women's Research Network News*, p. 7.
- <sup>47</sup> *Montana's Nonprofits: The hidden sector in our economy*. Big Sky Institute.
- <sup>48</sup> 2001 study by Guidestar, national database on non-profit organizations.
- <sup>49</sup> *Montana's Nonprofits*.
- <sup>50</sup> Fair Share Network, 2003.
- <sup>51</sup> <http://ag.arizona.edu/AREC/VAA/Why.html> Accessed 5/6/03.
- <sup>52</sup> The framing for this section benefited from Carolyn Sachs, "Rural Women: Sustaining Farms, Feeding People" from *Sisterhood is Forever*. Morgan, Robin, ed. p. 368.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.