

# OACETT Women in Technology Networking Group

Meet our WIT chapter reps and networking group members. Find out what first sparked their interest in working in the tech industry, who their role model and mentors are, and what advice they have for women entering the tech field

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**Chapter:** Grand Valley

**Name:** Amy Carter, C.E.T

**Member since:** 2019

**Active volunteer since:** 2021

❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**

*I didn't, that is why mentoring young women in STEM is so important to me. Having a strong mentor is so valuable for ensuring the success and growth of Women in Tech.*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*There is an immeasurable value when you have diversity on any team; problems are approached from different viewpoints and more creative solutions can be found.*

❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?**

*When I joined the industry as a controls person, I was often the only female on the floor. There was a significant effort on my part to prove that I belonged there and was capable of completing the work at hand.*

❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**

*I think a broader understanding is needed of what the tech industry is. There is a very narrow view from the school level that STEM is - Engineering, Programming, Chemistry etc., which does not give the context needed to get girls excited about their possibilities. Initiatives like WIT are phenomenal for showing careers in the industry and to provide more details on where your future in Tech can go.*

❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**

*You need to be prepared to speak up and be a loud voice in the room. Recognize who those supportive individuals & mentors are and learn to ask for support. Even though you may have completed your education and received a degree in technology, you must continue further no matter what your technological knowledge.*

*Explore other areas of technology and combine it with other business industry areas such as Bachelor of Business Administration. You may venture in creating your own business in technology and having a Bachelor of Business Administration, would greatly help you to succeed. This can lead in the development of software applications in the areas of accounting and finance management that are greatly used in the day-to-day functions of a business. Any skills learned can also be used in the Video Game industry where the base of technology procedures is beyond then simply art design and animation.*



**Chapter:** Georgian Bay

**Name:** Tamara Lacroix, C.Tech., rcca

**Member since:** 2000 to 2009 and 2016 to 2022

**Active volunteer since:** 2020

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**

*I grew up in a family that was in construction. When I was small, I used to pull nails and I worked my way up to helping my dad build houses. I decided to take the Civil Engineering and Resources Engineering technology at Georgian College and graduated in 1990 and the rest they say is history.*

❖ **From 2008 to 2016, I worked for Ministry of Transportation and loved it. I did everything from Quality Assurance Asphalt, Special Projects and claims analyst to rising as a Contract Services Administrator to Head of Claims in Central and North East Region.**

❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**

*I not had the pleasure of having a mentor but I do work closely with several people that I feel have helped guide my career and my choices. When I was at MTO, I was a mentor for the Transportation Technician program it was a lot of fun as well as a challenge.*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*Women are just as if not better in the tech field because most see the bigger picture. Women provide valuable onsite to the tech field as they generally a different side of things in general. It forces others in the industry to think bigger, think better and improve the industry in general. Women are just as brilliant as men are but are expected to do it all. The challenge for most is to try to maintain the level of expectation.*

❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?**

*As I grew up in construction the old boys club was a thing for me until I began working full time. I have been in construction for 35 years. It was a challenge because I had to be better, work harder than everyone else was as I was usually the only women onsite. The old boys club is still there but with more women in the industry, it has lessened. For the most part, we call the old boys out now and do not let them get away with the behaviour that was normal back then. The new generation for the most part are more respectful and are better educated so the unacceptable behaviour is less in the forefront.*

❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**

*I need to educate parents of the girls in younger years to say it's ok to be the girl that wants to be an electrician, a carpenter, a mechanic and IT guru if that's is what they want. We need to break the mould and let girls, young women explore and have the opportunity, and to know it is acceptable to be different and to challenge themselves.*

❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**

*Do not give up if there is something you really want to do. Work hard and you will get there. People will respect you for it. I wish there was more support when I went to school. I was lucky to have parents that wanted to be independent and strong. They gave me the strength to work toward everything I wanted.*



**Chapter:** Grand Valley

**Name:** Patricia Espinola, C.E.T, CSP

**Member since:** June 2002

**Active volunteer since:** 2022

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**

*My first memory of boots on the ground was with my father on his construction site as a cement finisher when I was 7 years old. Needless to say, my fascination with construction started there. Art was my favorite subject throughout Elementary school and that turned into architecture in high school. I was one of two girls in my construction tech class where I learned the basics of residential construction. I enjoyed construction theory, but my passion was more hands-on construction, so I graduated from Conestoga College with a Construction Engineering Technology Diploma.*

❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**

*There have been a few throughout the years. My first project fresh out of College was preparing structural drawings for a multi-level resident apartment building for the University of Waterloo and then conducting site inspections during construction. My current project, the biggest so far, both in the scope of work and renovation budget is a building exterior rehabilitation of a multistory apartment building that first started in 2016 with a building envelope assessment because a few bricks fell off the face of the building.*

❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?** *I started my career with a very low female-to-male ratio in College and at my first job placement 20 years ago but have seen an increase in female representation in my field every year. I attended a “Women and Students Building Science Forum” presented by IIBEC (International Institute of Building Science Consultants) this month and it was so amazing and encouraging to see all the female students being empowered by the Female Building Science panelists*



**Chapter:** Windsor-Essex

**Name:** Jennifer Fabbro, C.Tech.

**Member since:** June 2000

**Active volunteer since:** April 2022

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**

*My father brought home AutoCAD (v12) when I was in grade 8 and told me, “I have a feeling you will be good at this!” I was hooked instantly and continued to teach myself until I was able to take drafting in high school. There was never anything else I wanted to do for a living. I feel lucky that I knew exactly what I wanted to do for a career from a young age.*

❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**

*I am currently a project manager on the Gordie Howe International Bridge Project, connecting Windsor Ontario to Detroit Michigan.*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

- ❖ *Women are smart, logical, and capable. Anyone who has something to positive and innovative to contribute to our industry deserves a voice and a role, regardless of their gender.*
- ❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? *Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?***  
*Find a great mentor who you respect and admire. Soak up every lesson, every piece of advice, and watch how they communicate and interact with others. Also...Speak up! Your education, skill, experience, and opinion matters.*



**Chapter:** Hamilton Chapter  
**Name:** Miranda Corvera, C.Tech.  
**Member since:** 2015  
**Active volunteer since:** April 2022

- ❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**  
*There are many interesting career opportunities in the tech industry and there are many women who are innovative and can make a positive impact. Gender diversity is important and females should be able to feel comfortable in any career of their choice.*
- ❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?**  
*I have been in the mechanical design field since 2001. I can honestly say that not much has changed since then. The number of females in this field are extremely low. Since 2001, I have worked for four companies and I have always been the only female on my team.*
- ❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**  
*More awareness of the various career opportunities while in school, promoting females in the roles that are mostly male dominated. Female mentors are needed and to hear from those who have made it to a leadership role would benefit tremendously.*
- ❖ **Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**  
*I wish I had mentoring while in school and if there were panel discussions to attend, I would have at the time. There was not anyone there to tell me how difficult it would be as a female in this industry. Depending on your personality, some women might adapt better than others might, but there are still many challenges to face and it would definitely be easier and more enjoyable if we were prepared.*



**Chapter:** Toronto Central  
**Name:** Shalevia Briscoe, C.Tech.  
**Member since:** 2015  
**Active volunteer since:** 2021

- ❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**  
*As a Track Designer, any project that I get to help design, to see come to fruition, and thus visit and gage in real life is exciting! Among those was the Metrolinx East Rail Maintenance Facility in Whitby, Ontario.*
- ❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*Representation in STEM is so important for everyone, and especially for young female minds. It used to frustrate me so when teachers and school counselors would say, “Do what you’re good at.” What does that mean??? Even as someone who was smart enough and good in math and sciences and enjoyed them, I still had no clue about the many ways those things could translate into different careers. Growing up at a time when we used encyclopedias and the Dewey Decimal System in libraries and such, the possibilities were not visible to me, much less tangible. And Oh, there are so many possibilities! Sometimes the simplest answer is the best answer. And sometimes our young minds are simply not aware of the awesome and exciting work that we get to do in our fields. A simple introduction to the possibilities and what we get to do on a daily basis can change not only the course of women’s lives, but affect the rest of ours as well—as many more come to the field.*



**Chapter:** Thunder Bay

**Name:** Stephanie Pesheau C.Tech, CAPM, LS

**Member since:** 2019

**Active volunteer since:** 2019

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the Engineering industry?**

*My curiosity and recognizing that designing is a fantastic way to combine my artistic abilities with my math skills, and interests in technology/engineering, into well-coordinated, highly technical, construction drawings. Construction drawings are the language the trades, and engineers use to communicate the work that is to be done.*

❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**

*I have had the pleasure of working on over 400 projects in Northern Ontario and ALL have interesting aspects unique to themselves. The projects that have larger community impact have always stayed close to my heart; such as the many educational facilities including, Matawa Education Centre, Geraldton, Sioux Lookout, and Atikokan High Schools, Community Centers and Arenas, and both The Baggage Building and Mariners Hall at Thunder Bay’s Waterfront. Lighting continues to be one of my passions and I am excited to continue to explore this area as a Lighting Specialist. One of the more recent projects included being part of the electrical design team for the Thunder Bay Boulevard Lake dam; TBT Engineering was hired as the Mechanical and Electrical engineering consultants on the project. Franco Gorenszach P.Eng engineered the electrical design for the dam, which also included Thunder Bay’s first permanent structural illumination project. The lighting design portion included illuminated handrails on the pedestrian bridge, and façade lighting on each of the buttresses which illuminates the arch’s between each sluice way and directly below. The Façade lighting was done in collaboration with Saco Technologies and is WRGB and fully customizable for holidays and city events.*

❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**

*Shortly after graduating Architectural Technology at Confederation College, I was hired as a junior electrical designer at Profor Engineering. Leanne was a Senior Mechanical Designer and just a wealth of knowledge, experience, leadership and is a trusted friend. She has taught me everything I know about the importance of quality construction drawings; in addition to how to navigate and balance motherhood and my career. It was difficult to see her retire, but it was so well deserved and we still*



*keep in touch. One reason I created the Thunder Bay Mixer and Social to help foster further mentoring and networking, as others may not have the work environment to cultivate that kind of pairing.*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*We should all follow our passions regardless of gender statistics, gender stereotypes, and use other people's doubts in our abilities to fuel our personal fires to make things easier for the younger generations. We need to be seen; so others will feel equally represented when considering engineering or technology as a viable career option.*

❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?**

*I have not found, nor personally experienced any gender inequality within the company's I have worked for, nor in collaboration with, nor by any of our clients. We are highly respected for what we know and for what we contribute to the team, and to our projects. If you are experiencing anything less, including any sort of discrimination, it may be time to brush up on that resume.*

❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**

*Most careers blossom in "happen-stances" right place, at the right time. Volunteer, take up space, ask questions. Let your interests and passions lead you, and work will never feel like "work".*



**Chapter:** Cornwall

**Name:** Linda Fragnito, C.Tech.

**Member since:** First joined in 2006, rejoined 2022

**Active volunteer since:** 2022

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**

*Has a teenager after watching the Bionic Woman TV show, my interest sparked in wanting to know more about technology. Specially to know how these FEMBOTS could be built (Hardware and Software).*

❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**

*Currently in the process in completing, a Certificate in Cybersecurity from Lambton College where the Capstone Project will be converted for the Technical Report required to attain the C.E.T. (Certified Engineering Technologist) designation.*

❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**

*Mr. Gagne my high school shop teacher at La Citadelle encouraged me to pursue my interest in technology especially that I was the only girls at the time fascinated in technology.*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*Women should not be afraid to join the tech industry. It should not be on the basis of being either a men or a women since this a profession where your intellectual mind is developed and challenged creatively.*

❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?**

*I would say since 2006, more women are recognizing that a profession in technology is rewarding were many paths in various industry are opened.*

❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**

*To attract more women in the tech industry, the influence of development in the profession should start early at the High School level. Most women students may not know what the potential openings and technological advancements. To have already and existing women working in the tech industry influence younger women to mentor career paths.*



**Chapter:** Timmins Regional  
**Name:** Melissa Blais, C.E.T.  
**Member Since:** 2014  
**Active Volunteer Since:** 2020

*Volunteering with OACETT is a rewarding pleasure. Not only do you get to meet other people in the industry, you get to create everlasting bonds with other members. Becoming a W.I.T. representative has allowed me to network alongside other W.I.T. representatives from across Ontario. I have also been able to coordinate events, which enabled our community near and far come together.*



**Chapter:** Chatham-Kent  
**Name:** Margaret Gray, C.E.T.  
**Member since:** 2017  
**Active volunteer since:** 2018

❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**

*More girls and boys in elementary and high school need to see women in tech positions. Women also need to share what they do with the younger generation.*

❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**

*Don't change who you are to fit the mold of your job, your career will always have highs and lows and don't be discouraged when you're going through a "low" and always advocate for yourself because no one else will.*



**Chapter:** Renfrew County  
**Name:** Wanita Champoux  
**Member since:** 2018  
**Active volunteer since:** 2022

- ❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**  
*My interest was sparked at a young age as I shadowed my father who worked in construction.*
- ❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**  
*The most exciting project I have worked on was the final college project in my Civil Engineering program. I built transparent plexiglass boxes and mimicked a flowing drainage system with various sized granular material. The project was designed to debate specifications the Ontario Building Code outlined for granular material used in drainage systems.*
- ❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**  
*My supervisor at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, John Emond, is a phenomenal role model and is consistently coaching me towards success.*
- ❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**  
*It is important for women to get involved because we have a different way of thinking and the industry needs all innovative minds, regardless of gender.*
- ❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**  
*I believe young women need to be encouraged to explore any career of interest, regardless of elegance or social norms.*
- ❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**  
*Anything is possible if you make goals and strive for them. I wish I would have known how satisfactory the Civil Engineering field was and wish I had chosen the adventure sooner in life.*



**Chapter:** Peterborough  
**Name:** Natasha Parker, C.Tech., rcji  
**Member since:** 2013  
**Active volunteer since:** 2019

*I have been working for the City of Peterborough for 7 years as an Inspector for Public Works. As an inspector I prepare inspections of infrastructure, pavement, sidewalks, storm and sanitary sewers. Preparation of in house specifications for in house maintenance and restoration projects. Maintain inspection records and compile*



technical information for reports including risk management investigations. I embraced the opportunity to take on the WIT rep for the Peterborough Chapter to learn from other women in the industry.

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**

*My interest was first sparked to work in the tech industry at a younger age as a family member worked in the field and talked so highly of his experiences.*

❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**

*Every day is filled with different excitements, challenges and new experiences*

❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**

*I have several role models and mentors. Looking up to a family member I wanted to follow in the same footsteps and a female mentor in my workplaces who inspires me to continue to keep advancing any way possible*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*It is important for women to join the tech industry, as there is so many opportunities for women that they're just not aware of*

❖ **In what way has the industry changed since you joined?**

*The industry has changed since I started with more opportunities for women.*

❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**

*More actions need to be taken in reaching out to women at a young age and providing the knowledge and opportunities that they too could be a part of*

❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**

*I would give the advice to women entering the tech field that yes, there will be hurdles, but those hurdles make us stronger. Set your goals and go for them!*



**Chapter: Niagara**

**Name: Tamara Gifford**

**Member since: 2022**

**Active volunteer since: 2022**

❖ **What first sparked your interest in working in the tech industry?**

*I became interested in the tech industry because of the vast amount of diversity of technical growth and expansion, how it has no limits.*

❖ **What is your most exciting project to date?**

*At this moment my projects are limited, however the civil engineering program allowed me to become acquainted with a variety of technical fields. The most exciting project was the bridge design competition. I found it very exhilarating with how changes to grade, size, and types of steel members significantly reduced the overall cost of the bridge. I started at \$1,300,000 dollars and was able to reduce it to a price of \$98,000, which was a very rewarding and proud moment.*

❖ **Did you have a role model or mentor?**

*I did have a remarkable role model and astonishing mentor I found through the tutoring program at Niagara College who is Jessica Garrett. She has encouraged me in such a positive, exciting way that helped me overcome different trials and challenges I faced in the civil engineer program.*

❖ **Why is it important for women to join the tech industry?**

*I feel women bring a lot to the table, such as attention to detail, calmness, clarity and open-mindedness to situations. I also feel that women bring intuition, insight, and in my opinion, a sense of family element to the industry as well.*

❖ **What actions need to be taken to attract more women to the tech industry?**

*I think more outreach to girls at an early age such as between grades 6-8 is needed. We also need to promote the self-esteem and the empowerment the tech industry can give. The self-discovery, determination and confidence it can bring out in us, which directly comes from the education and the industry needs to be promoted as well. It has been truly life altering for the better and I am honored and forever thankful and proud to have been able to become a part of this industry.*

❖ **What advice would you give to women entering the tech field? Is there anything you wish you had known before entering the field?**

*My advice is that with hard work and dedication, at any age anything can be done successfully (just do not give up), and that the emotional gratification far exceeds the struggle encountered in training and education. Finding a study partner or group, tutor or mentor and any outside resources to help sooner than later can be vital in working towards your success.*



**Chapter:** Grand Valley

**Name:** Fiona Gomersall, C.E.T.

**Member since:** 2020

**Active volunteer since:** 2020

*Working as a professional within the tech industry is borne of a lifelong dreams. As a child, I dreamed of building satellites and rockets, and I hand built many model space rockets and vehicles and created them with materials at hand. This child's play was borne of having a mother that never discouraged me and led by example by following her childhood dreams. My mother loved sports and won two provincial championships in basketball and in badminton in the early 1960s. Her love of sports led her to fight with her parents to finish high school, so she could pay for and pursue a degree and eventually a career in recreational sports. Her drive to follow her dreams, even when heavily discouraged gave me the opportunity to follow my joy and why I am in tech today. I believe that in a life full of ups and downs, it's important to be able to do what brings you some joy and tech has given me the skills to deepen my interests in programming, electronics, and mechanics.*



**Chapter:** Lanark, Leeds and Grenville

**Name:** Kathryn Reilander, C.E.T.

**Member since:** 2012

**Active volunteer since:** 2020

*When I was finishing high school, I applied to the Electrical Engineering program at the University of Ottawa. I enjoyed math and science, but I was also following my best friend who had applied to that program. I really struggled and found university very intimidating. I decided to apply for the Electrical Engineering Technician program at Algonquin College. College had never been an option that was suggested to me. There was (and still is) an unfair stigma about a college education.*

*Algonquin College changed my life. I was given so much support both academically and financially through bursaries and awards that were available, especially for women in technical programs. I was given resources to help me become a good student and my professors were very approachable and involved with student success. I also developed a network of people in the electrical industry and saw the rewarding and well-paying technical careers that are available.*

*Once I graduated, I started teaching one of the first year classes at Algonquin College. I combined part-time teaching with private sector work at Nortel Networks and Stantec Consulting. I did return to university to get my degree in Electrical Engineering and was hired as a full-time professor at Algonquin College. I now teach the program's utility stream, which prepares students to work in electricity generation and transmission.*

*Algonquin College now has a special program to encourage and support Women in STEM.*

[www.algonquincollege.com/seat](http://www.algonquincollege.com/seat).