



# Women in appraising

*International Women's Day* is a celebration of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women around the globe. Held every year on March 8, this special day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. The campaign theme for 2021's special day is '**Choose To Challenge**'. A challenged world is an alert world. And from challenge comes change.

Within the membership of the Appraisal Institute of Canada (AIC), we are fortunate to have an amazing number of female AACIs, CRAs and Candidates who are establishing careers and making significant contributions to the real estate appraisal profession throughout our vast country. On these pages, we are proud to present a cross section of these amazing women who are choosing to challenge themselves and our profession, and to share their thoughts on what we could be doing even better in this regard.



# Women in appraising



*Carrie Russell*

**AACI, P.App, MAI, RIBC, ISHC**  
Senior Managing Partner, HVS Canada

**Carrie** is a graduate of the University of Victoria, obtaining a Bachelor of Commerce with Distinction. After graduation and time spent gaining valuable hands-on experience in the hotel industry, Carrie joined HVS as an associate over 23 years ago. She

has been influential in establishing HVS's presence in Canada as the leading hospitality consulting and valuation firm. Carrie has attained AACI designation from the AIC and her MAI designation from the Appraisal Institute in the US. As well, she is a member of the International Society of Hotel Consultants (ISHC) and the Real Estate Institute of BC (RIBC).

Over the course of her career, Carrie has provided hospitality consulting services including appraisals, feasibility and market studies, and other specialized consulting services including asset management guidance for thousands of hotel properties throughout Canada and the US. She has authored several articles on various topics relevant to the industry and is a highly sought-after speaker. Carrie is a regular speaker at several conferences including the Canadian Hotel Investment Conference and the Western Canadian Lodging Conference.

Carrie has served on the HVS Board of Directors and the Senior Leadership Team making a significant contribution to the global interests of the company. She also serves on the National Board for the AIC.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

*I think gender balance is a no-brainer for both the profession and the professionals. A career in appraisal is rewarding, fulfilling and prosperous, which is a door that should be open to everyone. In a profession where we want our colleagues to reflect the highest level of credibility, it only makes sense to recruit from and cultivate the largest talent pool possible.*

## **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

*Mentorship is a key to increasing gender balance. A strong network is critical to being a successful professional in our industry and, therefore, leaders in our profession should be aware of bringing gender balance into their networks, teams and businesses. As women continue to ascend to leadership roles in the profession, more will follow in their footsteps. I would hope that, in this era, we are cognizant of the benefits of diversity and that we are frequently considering our bias that impedes the goal of not only gender balance, but overall diversity*



*Ayda Chamcham*

**AACI, P.App**  
Chamsquared Advisory

Prior to moving to Montreal from France, **Ayda** earned her Master's degrees in engineering from the National Institute of Applied Sciences (INSA de Rouen) and in Urban and Real Estate Management through the ESSEC Business School. Prior to working with a REIT in France, she worked

as a building site project manager before moving to Canada where she became well-versed in commercial and industrial appraisals. Ayda started appraising commercial and industrial properties and decided to focus on hotel appraisals, as well as feasibility and market studies for nordik spas, convention centres, and waterparks in Quebec. She also undertook projects in Ontario, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

She has achieved her MRICS with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors as well as her AACI with the AIC. Ayda presently sits on the Board of the AIC Quebec Chapter and is also involved with the AIC's national committees dealing with Accreditation and the Future of Valuation. In 2020, she was recognized by the AIC as a 'Top Appraiser under 40.' In May of last year, she incorporated herself to provide consultancy and advisory services through her company Chamsquared Advisory. She is also a lecturer for a master's-level course in Real Estate Economics and Cost Estimation for architects with the University of Montreal.

Ayda has served for a number of years on the Board of the Young Leaders Circle of the International Economic Forum of the Americas, where members engage in private conversations with academics, strategists and leaders to better understand international contexts, decisions and policies. She volunteers with organizations committed to help those surviving the streets get back on their feet.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

*Improving gender balance in the profession remains a challenge. I would say that women bring a more human approach, a different sensitivity and pragmatism by which they can distinguish themselves in a rather masculine profession. Gender representation is paramount because better decision-making results from combining diverse perspectives. Women have the strengths that complement what organizations might lack.*

## **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

*More transparency, fairness and inclusion would go a long way towards establishing things such as equal pay for equal work, and equal opportunities for promotions and professional considerations. Having more female representation can also help future generations identify with role models.*



**Joanne Slaney**  
AACI, P.App

Manager of Assessment, City of St. John's

**Joanne** has worked within the appraisal field since graduating from Memorial University with a joint Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Arts in 2004. She gained valuable experience by valuing a wide range of commercial properties including multi-residential, residential condominium,

general commercial, remote fishing lodges, airport facilities, golf course communities and ski hill developments. Currently, in her role as Manager of Assessment with the City of St. John's, she provides leadership and manages the operation of the City's Assessment Division. Joanne and her team are responsible for ensuring fair and accurate assessment valuations of real property within St. John's to provide a basis for property taxation for municipal operating purposes.

#### **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

As of July 1, 2020, Stats Canada reported there are over 19 million women living in Canada, which accounted for over 50% of the total population. That statistic alone should be enough to show you WHY we need to work towards better gender representation! In order for our profession to continue and grow it is important that we continue to appeal to a cross section of society, a society that as of 2020 was made up of a female majority. Now like any good appraiser moving away from the numbers to the opinion side of this question. Personally, I have seen the gender balance improve over my career, and our profession is the better for it. Balanced gender representation brings different perspective together, allows for more in-depth discussion and creates a profession that is representative of society as a whole. Today a better balance of gender extends beyond the traditional male and female groups. As the definition of gender continues to evolve, we as a profession must continue to grow and develop into an inclusive group that represents all gender identities.

#### **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

Some of the top challenges women in real estate face are: lack of mentorship, limited leadership roles, limited career advancement and pay inequity. I personally have experienced several of these challenges in my career. I believe in order to encourage and enable more women to entry into this profession we need to work on removing these challenges. Mentorship was a big thing for me. I spent most of my career at Altus Group and I had an opportunity to work with many wonderful mentors who encouraged and supported me. As a membership, we have a responsibility to encourage all members, to be open to mentoring, and to offer support and advice. We need to ensure that our leadership, our committees, our conferences, etc. are representative of the diversity of our membership... after all, seeing is believing.



**Debbie Pieterse**

B. Sc. Agric., AAM, AACI, P.App,  
CAFA, RFPP

Senior Appraiser/Owner, Prairie Sky  
Appraisal & Consulting Services

In 1982, **Debbie** graduated with a degree in agriculture and decided to apply for jobs that had an agricultural background as a requirement. To her surprise, there were a number of assessment office

positions with the Assessment Branch for the Province of Manitoba. Thus began her almost 40 year career of property valuation.

With her love of inspection fieldwork, research, analysis, and report writing, it has been a career for which she is well suited and one she encourages other women to take up, due to its flexible work hours, which can be very accommodating to today's complicated family/work/life balance.

Debbie likes to point out that she has finished reports in hotel rooms in different vacation destinations, and, through the magic of the internet and email, has provided service to her clients, even while seeing exotic destinations with her husband and working on completing her bucket list.

#### **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

Personally, I have never been in favour of 'quotas' or hiring women for the sake of hiring them based on their sex, because I feel I have the skills and knowledge to do the job, and have excelled at it throughout my career. I have refused to identify as a employment equity group on interviews so that I would not get extra points because I was a woman. I would never like to think that I got any job because I was a woman because I find and have found that demeaning of my talents and abilities. It was a matter of giving women the opportunity and exposure to the profession, which showed that women could do the job as effectively as males could in a traditionally male role. Currently, there is gender parity for the assessment officers in Manitoba for that reason

#### **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

Make women more aware of the appraisal profession and the opportunities available to them for a interesting and prosperous future.

*"As women continue to ascend to leadership roles in the profession, more will follow in their footsteps."*

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**Suzanne De Jong**  
AAI, P.App

Vice President of Commercial Operations, Metrix Realty Group

As a fee appraiser, **Suzanne** completes valuation and consulting work in a variety of areas including multi-family residential, commercial, industrial and land development. With over 30 years of experience in the appraisal field,

Suzanne joined the AIC in 1990, and subsequently obtained her CRA designation in 1993 and her AAI in 2003.

Suzanne has been actively involved as a volunteer with the AIC at the local, provincial and national levels since 1996. She has served on the Executive of the AIC's London Chapter since 1996 and is a past Member of the Board of Directors for the Ontario Association. Suzanne has served on the AIC's National Board of Directors and is the current Chair of the Communications Committee.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

*I believe that this is an extremely important objective because women have equal merit.*

## **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

*I think the AIC is doing a good job enabling and encouraging more women into the profession, however, we could do better by engaging females at high schools, universities and colleges by presenting the many fee and non-fee opportunities for women. It has been my experience that this profession has allowed me to have a work life balance that many professions do not. I have been able to enjoy a successful professional career while still being actively involved with raising my family including taking extended periods of time away from my work for personal fulfillment. We can promote this aspect of an appraisal career and showcase women within the AIC and their diverse knowledge within this professional.*



**Deana Halladay**  
CRA, P.App

Halladay Appraisal Services Ltd.

Through her small appraisal firm, **Deana** provides professional services that include advice to homeowners, family property matters (divorce, separation, estate planning, probate and pre-nuptial agreements), non-AMC

lender work and litigation cases involving residential property. She is a long-time Certified Instructor for the Professional Practice Seminar and a member of the AIC's 'Shaping the Future' Task Force. She has served on many national and provincial committees. Deana is a huge proponent of volunteerism. Her diverse appraisal practice and experience has been an unintended consequence of the benefits of volunteering.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

*Short answer – it helps to improve our profession. Diversity in our membership, collaborating on ideas and bringing multi-faceted viewpoints will lead to increases in productivity and innovation within the AIC and the work we do as appraisers.*

## **What changes would enable / encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

*I honestly do not believe there are barriers to entering the profession for women. I have witnessed the demographics of the AIC shift over the past few decades to being far more balanced. Promoting the flexibility of the work/life balance within the appraisal profession may encourage even more women to pursue a career as an appraiser.*



**Kimberly Maher**  
B.Comm, AAI, P.App

Co-owner and managing partner at Brunsdon Lawrek & Associates

**Kimberly** has been providing professional real estate valuation services to clients since 1999. Focusing primarily on commercial real estate, she provides expert valuation and consulting services

to financial institutions, government organizations, major real estate development companies, non-profit groups, landlords and tenants, as well as professional firms of lawyers and accountants. She provides an objective view of the real estate marketplace, providing realistic and trusted advice to her clients.

A member of the AIC since 1999, Kimberly has been an active volunteer with the Institute at both the provincial and national levels over the past decade.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

*A strong and vibrant profession needs to be reflective of the society it serves and the people it recruits into the field. With women accounting for the majority of the growth in the Canadian labour force in recent decades, working toward balanced gender representation will be crucial to managing retirements and growth.*

*“I have witnessed the demographics of the AIC shift over the past few decades to being far more balanced.”*

**What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

The AIC must share the stories and profiles of women who have already achieved success and prominence in our field. This can be done in a variety of ways – formal marketing, social media, and informal communication. Ensuring opportunities for mentorship and peer support will also be essential to keep women in our profession.



**Bobbi-Jo Reardon**  
AAI, P.App

Director, Research, Valuation & Advisory, Altus Expert Services, Altus Group

**Bobbi-Jo** has been providing professional services on Prince Edward Island for 25 years with her work expanding throughout Atlantic Canada over the past 10 years. She has performed appraisal assignments that encompass many types and sizes of real estate, including investment properties, apartments, hospitality, senior's housing, industrial properties, special use properties, sub-divisions, etc., for purposes of purchase and sale, lease analysis, financing, consulting purposes as well as tax and foreclosure. Bobbi-Jo has served as President and Past-President of the AIC's PEI Association and has been a member of the Provincial Board of Directors for over 20 years.

**Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

It has been proven that companies with a diverse workforce benefit financially, socially, and culturally. Women bring a different perspective to male-dominated industries and enhance collaboration. More women working in these environments who can mentor Candidates will improve the industry.

**What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

University career counselling at an early stage in a Bachelor of Commerce program could open dialogue for students who may not have considered property valuation as a viable career choice. Education and mentoring are the key to opening doors for young adults in this industry.



**Grace Muzyka**  
AAI, P.App

Partner, Brunson Lawrek & Associates

With 28 years of real estate experience, **Grace** holds her AAI, P.App designation from the AIC and the CRP designation from the Real Estate Institute of Canada (REIC). Her primary areas of practice are real property assessment and property tax consulting, as well as the

appraisal of a wide spectrum of commercial property types. She is a certified reserve fund planner and conducts reserve fund studies for condominium corporations and other institutional clients with long-term planning needs. Grace also works with local, provincial and nationally owned private sector firms as well as various government and non-profit organizations.

**Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

A better gender balance in the appraisal profession would equate to a wider talent pool with a broader range of perspectives and experiences that is more reflective of the consumer we serve.



**Karen Koebel-Medlicott**, B.A., CRA

Koebel-Medlicott Real Estate & Appraisals

**Karen** graduated from the University of Waterloo, and obtained the CRA designation through studies at UBC. Volunteering, networking, and continuous learning are extremely

important to her. She has worked in the appraisal industry for more than 17 years, and has been a volunteer for over 15 years, including the AIC-Ontario Association Board of Directors and the Executive of the Waterloo-Wellington Chapter AI-ON. In addition to being an appraiser, she is also a licensed real estate broker. Previously, she was licenced as an Accredited Mortgage Professional, and had completed programs with the Investment Funds Institute of Canada and the Canadian Securities Institute during her years of employment in the Investment Division of a major Canadian financial services company.

**Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

Until the last five years or so, there were many more men than women in the appraisal industry, and the disparity was even more pronounced in leadership positions. Involvement in a gender

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balanced/gender neutral environment, whether at the member, volunteer, or leadership levels leads to increased credibility and synergies, which can improve insight and stir innovation. Still more needs to be done to educate our clients and construction trades people that being a male is not a prerequisite for being qualified and competent as an appraiser.

## **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

AIC has done a good job of showing diversity in the advertising done by national. This visibility serves well to show potential students and candidates that gender is not relevant in being an appraiser. However, to address increasing awareness with stakeholders, there needs to be more recognition at all levels of women who have shown achievement and competence. Further steps should be taken to empower more women to advocate for the profession in stakeholder interactions.



**Laura Kemp, CRA**

Owner/Appraiser, Kemp Appraisal Ltd.

In 2006, **Laura** became a Candidate of the AIC while working full-time in her senior management marketing position in the insurance field. Having a 2-year-old daughter made travel difficult, so she sought out a career that would allow more flexibility while utilizing her strong

marketing and mathematical skills. The field of appraisal was a perfect fit.

In 2006, she started her courses while maintaining her existing management position. In 2007, her son was born and she spent her entire maternity leave crashing through as many courses as she could. In 2008, she started performing appraisals and began her long history of volunteer work with the AIC.

After obtaining her CRA designation in 2011, Laura opened her own appraisal firm in 2012.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

When I started volunteering, most AIC committees were male dominant, but this has changed drastically. The appraisal profession is perfectly suited to women with strong organizational, communication and mathematical skills. Interesting enough, I found that many female homeowners are more comfortable with a female appraiser coming into their home. The self-employment and home office has allowed me to be assessable for my children and never miss an important event.

*“Still more needs to be done to educate our clients and construction trades people that being a male is not a prerequisite for being qualified and competent as an appraiser.”*

## **What changes would enable/encourage the entry of more women into the profession?**

I believe awareness of the appraisal field is the biggest obstacle. Many university students across Canada do not know about the field of appraisal. It would be great if we could change this.



**Dena Knopp, CRA, P.App**

President, Advantage Valuation Group Inc.

Dena started appraising in the Calgary area in 2003, and now operates Advantage Valuation Group, focusing on residential and acreage properties, taking on assignments ranging from financing to relocations and litigation. Before joining the AIC, she worked as a paralegal, primarily in the areas of real

estate and foreclosures, which provided a great background for appraisal. Her portfolio of properties appraised includes typical residential, as well as complex and estate properties, acreages, and multi-family properties. Dena has volunteered in the profession for several years with the local Calgary Chapter, and she currently sits as an Alberta Association Director on the National Board of Directors for the AIC.

## **Why is it important that we work to better balance gender representation in the profession?**

The AIC is far more diverse than when I entered the profession 18 years ago. I am sure it was by no accident that I chose to work for a female-owned firm where more than half the employees were female and represented a younger demographic. I believe the success of women in the industry will continue to be the greatest encouragement to women considering the profession. Seeing women in visible roles, both within organizations and the AIC, signals what is possible and achievable. ■