It was a night of food and socializing at the Inspired Women program banquet, held at the Menihek Nordic Ski Club Chalet on Sunday, Feb. 27. The group celebrated the completion of the new business venture program offered for women in the region. (L-R) Sherry Boland; Debora Pitcher; Angie Cormier; Jill McLean; Cathie Robichaud; Megan Ford; Nadia Lelievre; Valérie Dupré; Corinna Freake; Charlotte Lessard; Moana Lebel; Chantal Lecavalier; Marie-Andrée Miron; Noreen Careen; Linda Keats. Paula Bugden photo

Sparking interest in business

New program for women promotes project ideas

By PAULA BUGDEN

A celebration was in order for the completion of the first Inspired Women program in Labrador West, when the group held its final banquet at the Menihek Nordic Ski Club Chalet on Feb. 27.

The Inspired Women program, which began last September, teaches basic entrepreneurship skills in both French and English and encourages women to pursue their own business ventures, explained Moana Lebel, coordinator and economic development officer for Labrador City.

The 10-member group included women from Labrador West and Fermont, Quebec. As part of Newfoundland and Labrador Francophone Economic Development, said Lebel, it was important to make it a community program.

More than 15 companies and organizations from local and provincial levels partnered to make the program a possibility. They included the Labrador West Status of Women Council and College of the North Atlantic (CNA), Status of Women Canada and the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development.

With eight sessions in both English and French, the program focused on improving communication of business ideas with others and creating personal networks, said Lebel. They had to develop their own project ideas, whether it was already in the works or starting from scratch.

> "It's [the program] made it so much easier. . .because for anyone wanting to start a business. . .there's a lot of jargon. This program makes you think about it and it's not complicated. It makes you realize it's possible and you can do it."
>
> **Megan Ford**

Even with a small group the business projects were diverse, she noted, ranging from designing and community development to the food and mining industries.

Since the projects are still in progress, some members aren't about to give away the details just yet.

Megan Ford, a 22-year-old from Labrador City, already had her business venture in mind before signing up for the Inspired Women program.

However, she said, the event gave her the opportunity to expand her network of contacts, which she didn't have before.

"But it's just not networking," she added. "It's [the program] made it so much easier ... because for anyone wanting to start a business ... there's a lot of jargon. This program makes you think about it and it's not complicated. It makes you realize it's possible and you can do it."

For Jill McLean, a 33-year-old from Labrador City, the program was a chance to learn more about the opportunities available in the area. Her main goal was to be "inspired" by something new.

In the meantime, 38-year-old Sherry Boland explained the overall success behind the program.

"We gained friendships out of it, and now we can inspire each other," she said about continuing their business projects.

More sessions for the Inspired Women program are set to take place in Goose Bay March 5-6.

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