Report: NAWAIC Spring Forum - Honolulu, HI (May 2024)

Introduction:

I am writing to you today to report on my experience at the recent NAWAIC Spring Forum in Honolulu. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the lunch keynote speaker was unable to attend, and I was fortunate enough to be called upon as a last-minute replacement. Despite the short notice, the event proved to be a valuable learning experience for me, filled with insightful speakers, engaging sessions, and the opportunity to connect with a vibrant community of women in the construction industry.

This year's forum was unique as it combined the PNW & PSW spring forums, resulting in a larger and more diverse group of attendees. The estimated number of participants was 250 women from various construction sectors across the Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest. The welcoming energy and enthusiasm throughout the event solidified the importance of this combined forum, fostering connections across regional boundaries.

Day 1:

- **Welcome Reception:** The forum kicked off with a welcoming party, providing a relaxed atmosphere to connect with fellow attendees and learn about the program. This was particularly valuable for first-time participants, who received essential information about the forum and networking opportunities.

Day 2:

- **Overcoming Adversity by Christine Camp (Avalon Development):** Day two opened with a powerful keynote address by Christine Camp of Avalon Development. Her talk, titled "Overcoming Adversity," offered inspiring insights into resilience and navigating challenges within the construction industry. This resonated strongly with many attendees, particularly those facing obstacles in their careers.
- **Filling in for the Lunch Speaker:** As you know, I was honored to fill in as the lunch speaker on Day 2. My presentation, focused on authenticity, the power of community and becomin a better version of yourself, generated a positive response and sparked engaging discussions during the following Q&A session.
- **Panel: Isolated Realities - Cultural and Logistical Project Challenges:** The day concluded with a panel discussion titled "Isolated Realities: Cultural and Logistical Project Challenges." The panel brought together diverse perspectives on managing construction projects in remote locations and navigating cultural differences.

Day 3:

- **Joint Business Meetings:** The final day commenced with joint business meetings, allowing forum participants to connect on business development opportunities and collaboration initiatives across the PNW and PSW regions.
- **Panel: Working Mothers and Caregivers:** Following the business meetings, a panel discussion titled "Working Mothers and Caregivers" explored the unique challenges and triumphs faced by women balancing motherhood/caregiving responsibilities with demanding careers in construction. This timely discussion provided valuable support and resources for women in the audience.

- **Lunch Speaker: Alice Inouye - "What is Your Superpower?":** The lunchtime keynote address by Alice Inouye, titled "What is Your Superpower?", was a powerful call to action. Alice encouraged attendees to identify their unique strengths and leverage them to empower themselves and others within the industry.
- **Closing Celebration:** The forum concluded with a festive evening celebration filled with Hawaiian traditions and a lively dance performance, providing a memorable opportunity to celebrate accomplishments and foster camaraderie.

Conclusion:

Overall, the NAWAIC Spring Forum was a resounding success. Filling in for the keynote speaker at such short notice was both challenging and rewarding. The experience allowed me to connect with a broader audience and share my knowledge within the industry. The diverse range of speakers, workshops, networking opportunities, and the combined forum format provided a wealth of information, inspiration, and a chance to connect with a broader network of women across regions.

Personal Takeaways:

- **I can make things happen:** trusting my gut and intuition and leaning into that was a big ah-ha and takeaway for me.
- **Strength in Collaboration:** The combined PNW & PSW spring forum highlighted the power of collaboration across regional boundaries. Connecting with women from different regions offered valuable insights and potential opportunities for future partnerships.
- **Building a Strong Network:** One of the most significant takeaways from the forum was the opportunity to connect with a dynamic and supportive network of women in construction. These connections will undoubtedly prove valuable as I continue my career journey.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important event.

Sincerely,

Misha Homara