

Sisters of Local 1985 Receive Recognition

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Left to right: Christy Ennett, Larissa Shire, Irene Rombaut, Rosa Bell, Colleen Ennett. Missing from photo: Jenna Carlson, Sonya Downing, Nathalie Grenier, Jamie Garrett

Sisters of Local 1985: In Their Own Words

Please briefly describe your basic job duties/responsibilities.

Christy, Fourth Year Scaffold Apprentice - Once given a job (build, teardown, or modification) an assessment is done. You get whatever material is needed then start your task. Duties generally include hauling material, building, dismantling, modifying the scaffold, and cleaning up your work area.

Jamie, Site Administrator - I provide administrative support to manage the site operations.

How did you become interested in this kind of work?

Irene, Fourth Year Scaffold Apprentice - My husband was a scaffolder. Hearing him talk about his work sparked an interest in me, because I enjoy being physically active.

Sonya, Journeyman Scaffolder - I needed a change from my previous employment as an OTR (Over the Road) Truck Driver.

Recently, a few of Safway’s “sisters of the trade,” Rosa Bell, Jenna Carlson, Sonya Downing, Christy Ennett, Colleen Ennett, Jaime Garrett, Nathalie Grenier, Irene Rombault and Larissa Shier, all workers on the Boundary Dam Integrated Carbon Capture Project, received accolades for their hard work and dedication to safety in an article by the Prairie Arctic Regional Council of Carpenters.

Safway is providing the access solutions for the \$1.4 billion Boundary Dam Integrated Carbon Capture and Storage Demonstration Project, located in Estevan, Saskatchewan, which is implementing the first-of-its-kind commercial-scale fully integrated carbon capture storage system in the coal-fired Unit 3 boiler. The new carbon capture storage system will reduce CO₂ emissions by 1 million tonnes (metric tons) each year. The captured CO₂ will be processed, transformed into a liquid and from there transported, via a carbon steel pipeline, to be stored for purchase by resource companies for use in oil recovery projects.

It is unique to find a high ratio of women participating in the labor workforce on prominent construction jobsites like the Boundary Dam. As the construction industry begins its slow ascent out of recession, an increasing gap between job openings and skilled labor continues to grow. Some of these jobs are beginning to be filled by women who are acquiring the needed expertise to fulfill industry needs in what has been and still is a male-dominated industry. Safway’s Boundary Dam jobsite currently boasts 19 percent women in its workforce – almost double the national average.

“Early in my career I was fortunate to be on a crew led by a female journeyman scaffolder. Her hard work and dedication to her trade instilled a belief in me that women can perform just as well as their male counterparts in industrial trades. At that time,

What kind of training did you need to go through for your work?

Jenna, First Year Apprentice - So far I have completed courses for basic jobsite training, fall arrest, Construction Safety Training Centre (CSTC), and RTR (employee rights and responsibilities).

Nathalie, Carpenter/Scaffolder - I have attended college courses, scaffolding courses, and an apprenticeship program.

What are your biggest challenges on the job?

Larissa, First Year Apprentice - Learning a lot of new information daily.

Christy - in June I go to school to become a Journeyman. My supervisor encouraged me to start leading my own crew, so I took the challenge. It has been difficult at times, but I'm thankful for the opportunity. I find challenges bring out the best in me.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

Nathalie - I enjoy working with my hands, so scaffolding is perfect for me. I like the feeling of accomplishment I get at the end of the day.

Larissa - The people I work with and the physical aspect of the job.

Jenna- I am still learning and look forward to learning something new every day.

Christy - The people I work with! There is a great group of people working onsite, and it makes each day enjoyable. I also like scaffolding in general. It's like building a giant lego set that I eventually get to tear apart and build anew.

Sonya - I enjoy the experience of building scaffolds. This has been a great fit for me.

she was the only female scaffolder on our site. I have watched the culture change and grow over my career, and I am very pleased to now work on a site with a one-to-three female-to-male ratio," said Site Supervisor Rick Schmegelsky when asked about his crew. "The entire team of scaffolders we have on site is one of the safest and most productive I have ever had the pleasure of working with in this industry. I am very proud of this team and the fact that as a company, we focus on our employees' skills, not their gender. I know the future is very bright for the women of Local 1985, and I look forward to what the future holds for our trade. Keep up the great work ladies!"

When asked about their career choices each of these women gave testimony to their enjoyment of the day-to-day mental and physical challenges. Undergoing continuous training and participation in apprenticeship programs has helped to prepare these employees to perform safely and effectively on the jobsite. Each sister recognizes that safety is a top priority and has taken steps to assist in the promotion of a strong safety culture. Deanne Compton, a project health safety manager on site adds, "Working on a high-profile project such as the SaskPower Carbon Capture project comes with many challenges – small footprint, multi-trades and multi-levels. Within the scheme of things we strive to promote worker safety. To-date, safety remains one of our foremost priorities. Building a safety culture takes drive, determination and passion – all factors we've witnessed on site while working with the sisters of Local 1985."

As the construction industry begins to create new jobs requiring skilled labor, the future looks bright for women in the construction workforce. Developing skills and seeking out appropriate training has allowed women to prove themselves not only capable of performing, but of doing it with noteworthy skill. Safway's sisters of Local 1985 working on the Boundary Dam Project have proven to be admirable examples of women meeting and exceeding industry needs in the construction workforce.