



CBTU CANADA'S BUILDING TRADES UNIONS

Imagine working in a uniform with essential equipment that is too big for you, which affects your safety on the job. When you bring it to the attention of your supervisor, he shrugs off your concern as aesthetic. Even if you loved your job, how long would you last working in an environment where you felt unheard and unwelcome? Most of us wouldn't last very long. Employees need to feel welcome and respected at work to reach their full potential.

With the bulk of current trade workers set to retire over the next 10 years, recruiting women to skilled trades is essential to preventing a skills gap. Build Together, a national Canadian Building Trades Unions (CBTU) program, helps the industry tap into this source of skilled labour by promoting, supporting and mentoring women in the skilled construction trades. A career in the trades provides secure, well-paid employment, yet women only represent four per cent of the skilled trades workforce.

CBTU's Build Together program has been working to change this by exposing women to the trades. Build Together has a team of tradeswomen who act as industry representatives. Located across Canada, the representatives are able to promote and advocate for women in the trades at the national and local level. "When people think about getting more women in the trades they often think it ends at recruitment, but supporting and mentoring women within the trades is equally important," says Lindsay Amundsen, Build Together's Director of Program Development and Operations. "Now that women have gained an awareness about the trades it's time for us to remove the barriers that pre-

vent them from thriving."

Mentorship plays a key role in keeping women in the trades. Build Together's mentorship program connects women in the trades and creates a network of support for them as they enter and advance in their careers.

Ensuring women have a work environment that is conducive to their success is equally important in retention. "As the workforce in skilled trades becomes more diverse the workplace culture needs to become more inclusive of women and other minorities, as our new Prime Minister said, 'Because it's 2015,'"

Removing barriers

In the past the burden fell on women to use humour to deflect discrimination or harassment, in fear that speaking out or filing a complaint would not make a difference. "Unions, employers, owners, contractors and tradespeople all have to commit to removing these barriers rather than blaming someone for failing to overcome them,"

CBTU has demonstrated their commitment to ensuring women enter and remain in the trades by introducing a new Build Together campaign that aims to create safe and welcoming work environments. Build Together has workshops, materials and diversity training modules that provide leadership with the information, tools and protocols they need to enforce a zero tolerance policy towards unwelcoming behaviour. "Workplace culture starts with leadership," says Robert Blakely, CBTU's Canadian Operating Director. "From modeling appropriate behaviour to holding people accountable for their ac-

tions." Change must come from the top down, but the benefits of a safe and welcoming work environment will be felt by organizations instantaneously. When workplace culture is inclusive and staff moral increases, ultimately productivity and efficiency improves. Research suggest in work environments where employees feel valued teamwork increases, which leads to decreased absenteeism and employee turnover.

This industry needs to attract and maintain a diverse workforce to survive and that means we need to create a workplace that's attractive to our new workforce. It won't be easy, but with Build Together, we're more than up for the challenge.

Although it is a large undertaking, Amundsen feels optimistic about the outcome, "It's going to take time to change, but none of the things we're asking for are out of the ordinary."

Build Together identifies the following indicators of a safe and welcoming work environment:

- Clean and accessible women's washrooms.
- Safety equipment in a variety of sizes to ensure they fit properly.
- Safety signs posted in plain sight.
- Sexual harassment and respectful workplace policies in place and enforced.

For more information about Build Together, visit: www.BuildTogether.ca or contact Lindsay Amundsen at LAmundsen@buildingtrades.ca or 613-236-0653.



BUILD TOGETHER

WOMEN OF THE BUILDING TRADES