



Industry training for all: your first step on the road to good jobs, good pay



Nicole Chabot is Vice-President of L. Chabot Enterprises and Chair of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association

By Nicole Chabot

There's never been a better time to start a career in heavy construction, whether you're young, new to Canada or not cut from the fabric of a traditional construction worker.

An aging workforce means there are thousands of jobs coming open in the coming years. Further, the industry is devising new recruitment and training programs to attract a diversity of potential workers and employees to all strands of the operations.

One such program was launched in January through River East Transcona School Division, called Introduction to Heavy Construction for Women. Another opportunity, offered by Seven Oaks School Division, will see a new 8-credit, co-operative vocational heavy construction program come into play.

"Young people are the lifeblood of the construction industry," said Carol Paul, Executive Director, Manitoba Construction Sector Council (MCSC). "As the existing generations retire and move on, companies need to attract and retain top talent to fill their spots."

Heavy construction has not been a part of the high school curriculum despite the skill shortages voiced by the industry, Paul noted.

Until now. The River East Transcona School Division program, the first of its kind, started earlier this year as partnership that included the Manitoba Heavy Construction



Manitoba Construction Sector Council Photo

Association, MCSC and the Office to Advance Women Apprentices, with funding from the Manitoba Status of Women. This program was geared to deliver an introduction to heavy construction to young women.

"I had all the essential skills for a career in construction but never had the opportunity to get my foot in the door, until now," student Jami Genik said.

Student Chloe Phillips agreed. "I already have the experience in heavy-duty trades in metal-fabrication," Phillips explained. "I enjoy what I'm learning and what I'm able to do as a woman. We don't get opportunity like this every day, especially females of my age."

A second program will be offered through the Seven Oaks School Division's Co-operative Vocational

Education (CVE) Program this fall. Seven Oak CVE's unique feature is the extended work placement portion of the program. Students have the opportunity to work in the field of their chosen trade for six to seven months, doing the job and making valuable contacts in the industry.

"The co-operative vocational program is more than just education, it's experiential, where students gain real-life industry experience," said Andreas Laubstedt, CVE Team Lead, Seven Oaks School Division. "It's where the community becomes the classroom. For many of our students, that translates into direct employment in industry."

Seven Oaks School Division is excited about its newest program, heavy construction. The heavy

construction program will allow students to explore several career paths like equipment operator, heavy duty mechanic or surveyor in the industry.

Both of these programs are the first of their kind in Manitoba and give young people the ability to explore the many diverse opportunities that exist within the heavy construction industry and allow the industry to highlight those who are succeeding in the field.

Such introductory and training courses are important because the adage – You can't be what you can't see! – is so true in a field that is traditionally staffed by men.

The industry offers good jobs, with career paths at good wages and benefits, including for those just entering the field.



Only 3.4 per cent of workers in heavy construction are women.

There is no better time to introduce young women to the heavy construction industry. Women are known to take excellent care of equipment, follow directions and pay close attention to details. The employers are excited about meeting the women and opening doors to their future.

– Colleen Munro, President, Munro Group; MCSC Board Chair and former MHCA Board Chair

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