

## **CUPE BC 2023 CONVENTION SKILLED TRADES COMMITTEE REPORT**

The CUPE BC Skilled Trades Committee has been working hard on furthering the advance of skilled trades in BC. 2023 wraps up a term with work that we are proud of having accomplished. We will continue our focus on reconciliation, promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion, and supporting women in the trades.

### **Discovery Trades Camp**

During 2022, one of our members - Lisa Scott - was instrumental in the creation and operation of 2 youth trades training camps in Quesnel, BC. Lisa Scott shared this with our Committee:

“I also organized, led, and facilitated my first ever Discovery Trades Camp in Quesnel. The weeks of August 8-12 was the all-girls camp, and the week of August 15-19 was the all-gender Indigenous camp, both having participants from ages 9-13.

I had different tradespeople and other folks from across BC to help me teach, guide, and mentor the youth as they experience the fun and excitement of trades exploration. All the youth were introduced to occupational health and safety principles, and they made different trades projects involving carpentry, electrical, masonry, painting, plumbing and sheet metal.

CUPE BC and the Skilled Trades Committee supported these camps by sending Leah Murray from the skilled trades committee to Quesnel to participate in the camps. Leah was a huge support to me and to all who attended the camps. She helped mentor, teach, prep materials for the projects, shop for supplies, and help organize some of the lunches.

Also attending the camps from Quesnel CUPE Local 4990 was Tracey Telford, an Indigenous Education Support worker for School District #28 (SD#28) and a member of the CUPE BC Indigenous Committee.

Also at the camp was April Kopetski, a custodian with SD#28 that helped with lunches, snacks and added extra shop support. Both Tracey and April came during their summer holidays to support the Indigenous camp.”

The success of these two camps has led to Lisa running two more camps over Spring Break. The Discover Trades camps in Quesnel will happen from March 20-24 for young women and from March 27-31, 2023 for Indigenous youth. All participants receive lunch, snacks, and personal protective equipment at no cost, and again will cover a range of

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different trades, where the students will get to try their hands at occupational health and safety principles, and they made different trades projects involving carpentry, electrical, masonry, painting, plumbing, sheet metal, welding, and Heavy equipment operators.

Just imagine the ability for youth to engage in trades at no cost to their families during spring break! Keep up the great work, Lisa.

### Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Conference

In May 2022, both Jonathan and Kirk attend the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum conference in Halifax. The theme was “*Recovery, Resilience, Readiness*”.

During the opening session, we heard from Jude Gerrard (Millbrook First Nation), who welcomed delegates to the territory the conference was being held on. This was followed by Peter Katz, a Juno-nominated Musician and Storyteller, who was the MC for the event.

Next, we heard from Andrew George, the Director of Indigenous Initiatives, RSE (red seal) Cook, who spoke with the BCITA on a panel about how to support Indigenous people with entering the trades and accessing mentorship to help them succeed in their apprenticeships. We also heard from Shylah Nokusis, a RSE Iron worker from the Osihcikewin Trades Training school. Her presentation included stories of recovery, resilience, and readiness, the theme of this year’s conference.

On Day 2, we heard from Keynote Speaker Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, a multi-award-winning psychology and education instructor who specializes in resiliency, navigating stress and change, and personal wellness. Her keynotes provide practical strategies, grounded in global research and case studies, that help foster resiliency within oneself and others.

Hanley-Dafoe is also the author of the award-winning and bestselling book “*Calm Within the Storm*”, which outlines a powerful and achievable path to everyday resiliency. It won the 2022 Silver Nautilus Award in the Psychology/Mental and Emotional Well-Being category.

The next plenary session was “*Building It Green: Integrating Climate Literacy into the Skilled Construction Trades*”. Canada’s Building Trades Unions, in working with their affiliated national construction trades training directors and in partnership with Climate Academics (CIRT), researchers (SRDC) and curriculum developers (SkillPlan), are

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creating industry awareness and training to better understand how processes and people can work together to impact climate change.

John Calvert, a retired professor from SFU, spoke about the need for all new construction to be built according to new standards through this collaboration; doing so will save money in the long run, as the building will cost less to operate after completion. John also spoke about the need for all levels of Government to see this through. The other panelist spoke on behalf of the Building Trade Unions, [SRDC](#) and [Skillplan](#).

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, announced a \$247 million investment in employer support across the country. CAF-FCA is the recipient of \$45 million in funding to administer grants to employers who hire new first-year apprentices in 39 Red Seal trades. This also helps first-year apprentices get the hands-on work experience they need for a career in the skilled trades.

The financial incentives available to small and medium-sized employers are \$5,000 per apprentice per year for a max of two Level 1 apprentices per employer; or \$10,000 per apprentice per year for a max of two Level 1 apprentices if the apprentice identifies as being from an under-represented group.

*“The federal government’s announcement is a reflection of the critical role of the skilled trades to Canada’s economy,”* noted France Daviault. *“Apprenticeship remains the best way to develop highly skilled trades professionals and these incentives will ensure that a broad pool of talent is available to employers with the expertise to train them.”*

CAF-FCA will collaborate with partners at [BuildForce Canada](#), [SkillPlan](#), [ApprenticeSearch.com](#), the [Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board](#) and the [Canadian Construction Association](#) to provide a range of supports, in addition to the grants, to the expert trainers of Canada’s future skilled trades workforce.

The last was *“TRC Call to Action #92 - Industry's Responsibility to Make Space for Indigenous Participation”*. Michelle Francis Denny (Director, Atlantic Indigenous Economic Development Integrated Research Program) and Rebecca Kragnes (Director, Indigenous Relations and Community Engagement, Bird Construction), spoke on advancing industry priorities through meaningful Indigenous relations. Indigenous engagement and participation is critical to creating shared values and enhancing relationships with impacted communities. In this session, the conference attendees investigated meaningful benchmarks contributing to this success, including core engagement and Indigenous Calls to Action and reconciliation, business best practices,

and employment growth and advancement. Rebecca Kragnes is now the Chair of the CAF Board of Directors!

### CAF Supporting Women in Trades (SWiT) Conference

In June 2022, both Leah and Lisa attended the CAF Supporting Women in Trades (SWiT) Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland. Their report is below:

“We were very fortunate to be able to attend the SWiT Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. The Conference included tradeswomen from across Canada, and we came together to help support, guide, and learn from each other. We discovered what other provinces are doing when it comes to addressing the challenges that women and underrepresented people face in the skilled trades and construction industry. We created allies, friendships and a community of people all working together to make this industry more inclusive and safer for all. The representation that came from British Columbia was unbelievable and was talked about throughout the conference. Being involved in this conference was empowering, and the support we were able to give each other was amazing. We are honored to have been a part of this movement.

The first session, titled “*Seeds of Change*”, featured keynote speakers that spoke about the real problems and issues that women are dealing with in all sectors of the trades industry. One of the first keynote speakers was Candace Carnahan of “*Step Up Your Safety*”. She presented a new way to think about safety, after she experienced a traumatic injury at the age of 21 where she lost her leg and nearly her life in a workplace accident. Through her story and journey, she talked about and demonstrated how to use our voices and to see safety as an opportunity, not just an obligation.

The plenary “*A Rising Tides Lifts All Boats - Working for Inclusion in the Trades*” led by Karen Dearlove (Executive Director, BC Centre for Women in the Trades) was one of our absolute favorites. The 2-part workshop showcased how great British Columbia is doing compared to a lot of other provinces, even though BC still has a very long way to go. This workshop provided an overview of the “*Be More Than a Bystander*” program, including statistics, scenarios, resources and supports. Creating healthy, safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces helps everyone! People from across Canada learned about what really happens in the trades, and it is not always good.

A 2017 report titled “*Enhancing the Retention and Advancement of Women in Trades*” identifies the toxic workplace environment, specifically gender-based bullying, harassment, and discrimination, as one of the main reasons women leave the trades. The “*Be More Than a Bystander*” program, developed in 2011 by the [Ending Violence](#)

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[Association BC](#) (EVA BC) and the BC Lions, recognizes that most men care deeply about the women and girls in their lives and the world, and it engages those men to take ownership and play active roles in ending gender-based bullying, harassment and violence. In partnership with the BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCWITT), the program was adapted specifically to address issues of discrimination, bullying and harassment in skilled trades training institutions and workplaces, with the aim of creating inclusive and safe spaces for everyone. Currently, BCCWITT is working on expanding the program to address other forms of workplace bullying, harassment, and discrimination more explicitly (including racism, homophobia, and transphobia).

Another epic plenary we attended was “*Equity in Apprenticeship & Technical Fields*”, with the legendary Dr. Marcia Braundy, a true pioneer for women in the trades. Dr. Marcia Braundy is a multidisciplinary academic feminist who keeps her hand in as a construction carpenter, multimedia project manager, educator, author, archivist, independent research scholar and social change activist. Marcia was British Columbia’s first Red Seal female carpenter (1981), and the first female carpenter in the union in BC! She has developed and delivered trades exploratory course curricula used across Canada. She chaired the Equity Committees of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board National Apprenticeship Committee and the Provincial Apprenticeship Board in British Columbia, as well as having a PhD in Technology Studies in Education from the University of British Columbia. She works with men and with women, often separately, to bring about effective integration for women in trades & technology training and work. Her book, “*Men & Women and Tools – Bridging the Divide*” from Fernwood Publishing is used in Technology Education at UBC. Her other projects include “[Lessons Learned & Best Practices for increasing Success for Women in Trades & Technical Fields](#)” and the currently in progress Equity in Apprenticeship & Technical Fields Digital Archive. Her publications are listed online at <http://www.men-women-tools.ca/Publications.htm>.

Another very informative session was called “*Fit Matters*” with Jodi Huettner (Helga Waer Inc.), which told the story behind our ill-fitting PPE. Jodi’s journey from field engineer to designer/supplier of women’s PPE has uncovered a shocking truth about trades and active STEMM industries. She has championed the inclusive PPE standards movement in BC, which demands that women’s body data be included in the design and manufacturing of safety gear. With the support of key industry stakeholders (ILWU, IUOE local 115, BCCWITT, BC Building trades, Build Together), she is using her story to advocate for meaningful policy change.

An amazing Alberta organization called “[Women Building Futures](#)” hosted a plenary session called “*Work Proud: Influencing Change*”. The guests for this session were

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amazing: Keeley Prockiwi (IRATA Level 3 Supervisor), Sheena Nakonechny (Industry & Alumni Relations Manager, Women Building Futures), and Tara Hoffmeier (Senior Advisor, Employer Engagement & Partnership Development, Women Building Futures).

Former BCCWITT executive director Nina Hansen hosted her plenary on Occupational Health and Safety. It was wonderful to reconnect with Nina and to learn more from her on mental health and well-being and how it affects us all on the job site. Nina is a Canadian Registered Safety Professional with more than 20 years' experience supporting workers and advocating for improvements in occupational health and safety law, policy, and enforcement. She is also a Certified Psychological Health and Safety Advisor and is passionate about addressing work-related psychosocial hazards such as discrimination, harassment, and violence. Nina worked for several years at the BC Federation of Labour supporting unions towards advocating for a robust apprenticeship and skills training system in BC. She would be a great guest speaker to invite to our workplaces to discuss mental health and well-being.

The "*Emerging Leaders, Women in Trades*" session had five women share their experiences in the trades, during which they discussed how women are marginalized in skilled trades workplaces and experience barriers. They discussed how female apprentices report more difficulty with finding employer sponsors and have lower apprenticeship completion rates than males, and how it leads to women not being able to access the high paying, full-time and leadership positions associated with certification in the trades. They talked about how a positive work environment and support from peers are key to program retention but in the absence of these, women apprentices report poorer mental health than male apprentices, which leads to a lack of confidence and sense of isolation.

The last session before the conference closed was from France Daviault, the Executive Director for CAF-FCA (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum), in which she shared the exciting and amazing news that they were launching a National Leadership Program for Women in Trades. This program is designed to provide tools and resources to help tradeswomen develop skills required to advance in their career as mentors, supervisors or managers, Union stewards, entrepreneurs, and skilled trades advocates. It will offer opportunities to network with like-minded individuals and provide recognition within our industries.

During the conference, there were also networking events and activities to share, enjoy and celebrate with all attendees. It was so moving to meet all these amazing tradeswomen from across Canada, but more so the ones from BC. Lisa Scott organized a dinner for a huge group of BC Tradeswomen and Female allies so that everyone

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could come together one last time before heading home the next day, not knowing if or when they might see each other again. Lisa and Leah were so grateful and honored to have been provided the opportunity to attend this amazing conference, the experiences will last a lifetime.”

### In Closing

The Skilled Trades Committee has had an amazing term, and has created, passed, and continued to work on our resolutions. We are dedicated to continuing our activism for diversity, equity and inclusion in the skilled trades and a safe working environment for everyone. We are doing our part to help with reconciliation and the calls to action, by creating opportunities for Indigenous youth in the skilled trades.

We look forward to moving the pendulum even farther in the upcoming years in the skilled trades and construction industry.

### Respectfully submitted:

Kirk Mercer – Chair  
Jonathan McCune – Co-Chair  
Leah Murray – Recording Secretary  
Lisa Scott  
Alex Jacobs

Michael Russell  
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