

Advancing WOMEN IN SKILLED TRADES

In 2016, Sydney joined SaskPower's Power Line Technician (PLT) apprenticeship program and is the first woman to complete the program. She's since finished all of her training and recently received her Red Seal designation.

Previously working on a drilling rig in the oilfields, Sydney was looking for a change. She'd gone to university right out of high school, but quickly learned she prefers to be outside working to being in a classroom. After seeing the apprenticeship posting on SaskPower.com, she decided to apply to the program. When asked about her decision to pursue a career as a PLT with SaskPower, Sydney says, "I figured it was similar to working on a drilling rig, but I would come out of it with my Red Seal."





Sydney is a mom to her little buddy Arthur and in her spare time you can find her sewing and gardening.

We recently sat down with Sydney to talk about her experience pursuing a career in a skilled trade with SaskPower. Learn more about her experience below:

Can you tell us a bit about your first few years with SaskPower?

After I found the Skills Assessment and Training Orientation (SATO) posting, I figured if I could work on the oil rigs, then this shouldn't be too bad; boy, was that an eye opener! I wasn't successful in SATO but had an opportunity to try out the trade as a labourer. I was accepted into the apprenticeship program after my second attempt at SATO.

My labourer experience helped because I could see all aspects of the trade. I worked with many different teams and experienced all kinds of jobs. Everyone was very helpful in that first year, and I attribute that to my current success. A couple of PLTs often took me out after work hours to teach me to climb and perform some of the skills assessment tasks. If I hadn't had that help, I don't know if I'd be in this position.

What is your favourite thing about being a PLT?

My days consist of working on new services, meter exchanges, broken poles and cross arms. No two days are the same — especially this time of year!

I like that you can do a variety of work with the same training. Once you receive your Red Seal, there are many different types of jobs you can bid on. In areas like Transmission, you can work with bigger equipment/voltages. The Distribution district takes calls and troubleshoots outages (distribution crew maintains and upgrades new and old infrastructure). Then there's the office side of things where you could be in safety, management or even planning jobs.

What's the most challenging part of the job?

Being the first female to go through the apprenticeship program at SaskPower, it was a little intimidating, especially being the only female in the room or navigating new work groups or crews. But I have nothing but positive experiences to share! My fears were always gone soon after I would start with a new group. Everyone at SaskPower has been welcoming and accommodating. I think it's more of a mental barrier that many women experience. Receiving my Red Seal, has helped me to feel a lot more confident walking into a room of my peers.

Have there been any experiences throughout your journey in a male-dominated trade that stands out to you?

I'm very blessed to work at a great company with great coworkers. I haven't had a bad experience. I also work with many different groups that support women in trades. I've had the chance to speak at various events; I was even featured on an episode of "[Powerline Podcast](#)." I find putting yourself out there and sharing your experiences will help someone who's maybe not so sure about the trades, which is one of the reasons I enjoy mentoring.

What advice would you give female high school students who wish to enter the skilled workforce?

In high school, I was never given any information about trade schools or the opportunity to try anything out. It felt like the teachers would push women toward university. In a trade school, you come out with a [Red Seal certificate](#), demonstrating the Canadian standard of excellence for a skilled trade and no student debt!

Taking a pre-employment or a trades trial program gives you the opportunity to try different things and become more confident before seeking employment in a trade.