

## The NETCO Minute

News from the National Electrical Trade Council, Eighth Edition, March 21, 2019

NETCO is jointly sponsored by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Canada and the Canadian Electrical Contractors Association (CECA) to address workforce development for Red Seal electrical trades. [www.netco.org](http://www.netco.org)

### NETCO'S BC Affiliates succeed with focus on Indigenous trainees

British Columbia's Electrical Joint Training Committee (EJTC) is now in the fourth cohort of its "Alternate Pathways to Electrical Careers" program for trainees from Indigenous backgrounds. This groundbreaking program's success rate is high, with many graduates of the first cohort (2017) still working in the electrical trade.

The program puts promising candidates into an intensive course of academic skills upgrading, and then moves them seamlessly into technical training and paid work experience. The EJTC is a partnership of IBEW 213 and of the Electrical Contractors Association of British Columbia (ECABC). The support of contractors in recognizing that the program provides high school equivalency was essential to the launch of the program.

The EJTC's external partners have also been key to Pathways' success. ACCESS, an employment services agency for Indigenous people, is currently the contract holder with the federal government funder. ACCESS also recruits the training candidates and provides ongoing coaching and support. SkillPlan, a training institute sponsored by the BC Building Trades, developed and delivers the Essential Skills component of the program. The EJTC delivers technical training and work experience.



Phil Davis, the EJTC's Managing Director, says that 80 per cent of Pathways participants are being dispatched to Local 213 contractors as apprentices.

"Pathways is a rigorous program, but we have put together a strong support system for students to ensure their success."

After 15 weeks of technical training, program participants proceed to 10 weeks of work experience with EJTC-affiliated contractors such as Houle Electric. Houle's Vice President of Projects, Ken Bitschy, told *Tradetalk* magazine that the company is committed to building a safe, diverse and inclusive workforce. "Houle believes we need to establish, build and maintain trusting relationships as an important aspect to the way we invest in and develop workforce capacity within Indigenous communities."

"We start our apprentices in our prefab shop to learn our business; they then go to job sites to learn the installation side, all while learning Houle's first priority, safety. All along they are mentored by quality trades people giving them the opportunity to work in all aspects of the electrical trade."

Trainee Alexa Eng said she couldn't be happier with her placement at Houle. "I'd like to stay here and get my Red Seal, and look forward to being a mentor for others."

*Adapted with permission from an article by Claudia Ferris in TradeTalk, the magazine of the BC Building Trades.*

### **About Ken Bitschy**

As Vice President of Projects at Houle Electric, based in Burnaby, B.C., Ken plans and leads the Project group operations to deliver excellent customer service and prompt, high quality professional workmanship. Ken is also Houle's Corporate Safety Officer, playing a key role in the company's stellar, industry-recognized safety record.



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**Our mailing address is:**  
NETCO Head Office  
1450 Meyerside Drive Suite 300  
Mississauga, ON  
L5T 2N5

[www.netco.org](http://www.netco.org)