Grant Cameron Correspondent

Nearly 37 years have passed since Susan Boorman first stepped into the world of apprenticeship training. “I was 12 when I started,” she jokes.

That’s not true, of course, but Boorman was young and green at the time. She also didn’t know a lot about apprenticeship training and had to learn — quickly.

Boorman has always embraced what she calls the “sink or swim” method of learning, and it has worked. “I can tell you I do a very fast dog paddle,” she says. “I’ve naturally just learned the trade as I’ve gone along.”

Today, Boorman is director of education and training at IBEW Local 353 and entails overseeing night school class training for members at four centres across the province. She’s also a prime example of how women can succeed in the construction industry — not just in the field, but on the administration side.

Boorman had no formal training — just a high school education and her own abilities — when she was hired in the early 80s by the Toronto Joint Apprenticeship Council (JAC), which mentored and guided her.

“I seemed to have a natural aptitude for administration and that was what the director of apprenticeship for the JAC saw in me way back in 1983 so that’s how I got into apprenticeship and training.”

Her career has taken a few twists and turns since then. She was at the JAC for 22 years in a variety of roles. She was executive assistant, apprenticeship co-ordinator and assistant training director. It was a small office and she wore many hats.

Eventually, she decided it was time for a change and in 2006 became manager of human resources at the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario (ECAO). The role entailed dealing with apprenticeship at the provincial level.

In 2013, she made the jump to IBEW Local 353 as apprenticeship co-ordinator.

“It was another leap on my part and one of those things that I had an awesome experience at the ECAO but it was sort of, like, ‘It was time to move on.’ I have many roles in the industry so I was able to work with the business manager and the then director of training.”

Boorman was only there five months when the director’s job became available.

“I went into the business manager and said, ‘Okay, who’s going to take over this job?’ and he looked at me and said, ‘You’re going to do it.’”

That was it. She became the new director of apprenticeship for the union. And, since then she’s never looked back.

Economic Snapshot

Toronto update: expect higher house prices and a slow-down in office construction

Based on its latest job numbers, Toronto’s economy is definitely in overdrive. Year-to-date (January to May) total employment in the Toronto Census Metro Area (CMA) is +22,000 over the past five months.

Despite the very strong year-to-date gain in total employment, Toronto’s unemployment rate edged up from 6.1% in January to 6.2% in May, below the 6.7% of the CMA’s labour force. This compares to a drop of 7,800 during the first five months of 2018. This exceptionally strong labour force growth is largely due to an estimated inflow of 100,000 to 125,000 (mostly international) migrants which more than offset a modest outward flow of individuals to other parts of the province.

Excluding spending on infrastructure, the fact that non-res construction intentions are down by 5% year to date due to declines in planned spending on industrial (-25%) and institutional (-7%) projects suggests that non-res construction will not make a positive contribution to Toronto’s economic growth in the near term.

This prospect is reinforced by the likelihood of a slowdown in office construction due an unprecedented volume of new office space under construction — the bulk of which is located in the Central Toronto area bounded by Bloor St. in the North, Don Valley in the East, Bathurst St. in the West and Lake Ontario in the South.

John Clinkard has over 35 years’ experience as an economist in international, national and regional research and analysis with leading financial institutions and media outlets in Canada.

Boorman’s greatest reward is seeing a trainee — whether it be male or female — become a journeyperson.

“They don’t necessarily have to stay electricians throughout their career. They can take that licence and move into other areas like safety training, trades training, inspections, all of those things that are related to the trades.”

Over the years, Boorman says the number of women entering the trade has increased, however, the percentage is still small in comparison to men. Only about two per cent of Local 353 members are women.

Government has been pushing initiatives to get more women into the trades, but Boorman notes that women, or men for that matter, will only pursue training if it’s what they really want to do — and can’t be forced.

“You can’t slot somebody into it because they’re either a target group or mom and dad says you have to do it. It’s a personal choice, so the women who apply, it’s because they want to do it.”

Boorman says that women who enter the trade don’t consider themselves different from their male counterparts.

“The women who are in the trade want to be identified, as their brothers are, as an electrician. That’s what they want to be identified as.”

They’re not different, she says, as they do the same training, jump through the same hoops, perform the same jobs, and have the same certificates.

Boorman says the IBEW has always been inclusive of women in the trades. She personally knows of one woman who went through her apprenticeship 20 years ago and is an electrician as well as cabling specialist.

“So, the opportunity is there somebody wants to grab it. And, with respect to applying to the trades, everybody starts out with the same thing. You’ve got to have your Grade 12, your math, physics and English. So, for everybody coming in it’s a level playing field. I think that’s one of the things that’s attractive for women coming in because it doesn’t say that you have to be six foot six and able to play basketball.”

Boorman’s greatest reward is seeing a trainee — whether it be male or female — become a journeyperson.

“They come in and say, I just want to shake your hand and thank you for all the help that you’ve given me.”

“It’s genuine satisfaction to see the women that I’ve helped, and the men, go through the various careers and paths and know that I had a little bit of input into the decisions they’ve made. That’s where I get the personal satisfaction from.”
It is estimated that one million skilled trades workers will be needed across Canada by 2020 – yet less than 10% of skilled trades workers are women.

Balancing the gender ratio can create a strong, diversified economy, while helping fill in the demand. Centre for Skills Development is helping women build towards that.

Our Women in Skilled Trades: Enhanced General Carpentry program provides eligible women with the tools and training to launch a career in the trades. Receive hands-on training, safety certifications and develop employability skills in the construction industry.

Let’s build towards a better future – call 905.333.3499 x321 to learn more or apply today.
Zahreddine begins to leave her mark on the industry

Julia Zahreddine is a site supervisor at Bridgecon Construction. She says that when some people learn she is in construction that they assume it is in an administrative capacity. Her key supervisor focus areas are safety and ensuring crews are in OHSA compliance on site.

They’re more likely to push back because long-time construction workers have their own way of doing things sometimes but she never felt it was a gender bias.

“I think this is a great sector for women to work in,” she says. “It’s stable and the pay is good. It’s hard to get in and going the scholarship route is the way to do it if you don’t have someone in your family or who you know working in construction because it can be hard to get in.”

Not only is the work steady and rewarding, it’s also gratifying in other ways, she adds.

“You drive by and look at the skyline and you know you help create the structure that is in that space and you’re putting your mark on the city,” she says. “It’s very cool.”

PCL celebrates the exceptional work, accomplishments of Dobbs and Kurina

Two female PCL employees have been recognized for their exceptional work in the industry.

Lilianne Dobbs

“My dad was an ironworker and he always said to me, ‘You should work in construction.’”

Growing up in a family of construction workers, Dobbs remembers always being around construction. When she was four years old, her dad built their family home and she helped by cleaning up scraps in their yard.

After high school, Dobbs thought she wanted to be a hairdresser, until one day when her dad said, “I’m taking your brother to the hairdresser’s union hall, are you coming?” The next thing she knew she was signing the papers and buying her first pair of steel-toed boots.

“While I was working my first labour job, I discovered how much I loved construction,” says Lilianne. “I joined the Carpenters’ union, went to trade school, and started my apprenticeship here.”

At 30, Lilianne was promoted to superintendent.

“I worked hard to prove myself and I always managed to make a good impression,” she says. “My strength has always been my people skills, that’s how I’ve grown my career over the years. I’ve built a good reputation and have earned the respect of my peers, managers and tradepeople.”

Looking back at her career, she says being a woman in construction never seemed unusual to her. “Compared to when I started, there are so many more women in construction now,” says Lilianne.

Lisa Kurina

“Lisa has been building her entire life. With a general contractor father, she had the opportunity to observe the intricacies of the construction industry, in her teenage years working on construction sites where she would help with schematics and drawings, permitting, and general labour, including forming and roofing,” reads the statement of support for her nomination.

Kurina has had leadership roles on some of PCLs most iconic projects in downtown Toronto, and has built a strong relationship with the Great Toronto Airports Authority, which has given PCL the opportunity to work on longstanding projects at Pearson Airport, including the recently announced GTA Baggage 2025 Master Agreement project.

“Lisa has mentored some of the strongest project managers that I know at PCL,” says Mike Love, PCL superintendent with increasing responsibility on Kurina’s projects. “I’ve watched several female and male colleagues grow in their career from co-ordinators to project managers under Lisa’s leadership. They learn, and take it and run with it, so much so, it has become evident that Lisa has built a department that everyone wants to come to and work in.”

Kurina has also been a role model to many women at PCL and in the construction industry because of her work ethic, leadership skills, how she handles herself in various situations, and her practical and tangible advice, states PCL.

TORONTO

Two female PCL employees have been recognized for their exceptional work in the industry.

Lilianne Dobbs

“My dad was an ironworker and he always said to me, ‘You should work in construction.’”

Growing up in a family of construction workers, Dobbs remembers always being around construction. When she was four years old, her dad built their family home and she helped by cleaning up scraps in their yard.

After high school, Dobbs thought she wanted to be a hairdresser, until one day when her dad said, “I’m taking your brother to the hairdresser’s union hall, are you coming?” The next thing she knew she was signing the papers and buying her first pair of steel-toed boots.

“While I was working my first labour job, I discovered how much I loved construction,” says Lilianne. “I joined the Carpenters’ union, went to trade school, and started my apprenticeship here.”

At 30, Lilianne was promoted to superintendent.

“I worked hard to prove myself and I always managed to make a good impression,” she says. “My strength has always been my people skills, that’s how I’ve grown my career over the years. I’ve built a good reputation and have earned the respect of my peers, managers and tradepeople.”

Looking back at her career, she says being a woman in construction never seemed unusual to her. “Compared to when I started, there are so many more women in construction now,” says Lilianne.

Lisa Kurina

“Lisa has been building her entire life. With a general contractor father, she had the opportunity to observe the intricacies of the construction industry, in her teenage years working on construction sites where she would help with schematics and drawings, permitting, and general labour, including forming and roofing,” reads the statement of support for her nomination.

Kurina has had leadership roles on some of PCLs most iconic projects in downtown Toronto, and has built a strong relationship with the Great Toronto Airports Authority, which has given PCL the opportunity to work on longstanding projects at Pearson Airport, including the recently announced GTA Baggage 2025 Master Agreement project.

“Lisa has mentored some of the strongest project managers that I know at PCL,” says Mike Love, PCL superintendent with increasing responsibility on Kurina’s projects. “I’ve watched several female and male colleagues grow in their career from co-ordinators to project managers under Lisa’s leadership. They learn, and take it and run with it, so much so, it has become evident that Lisa has built a department that everyone wants to come to and work in.”

Kurina has also been a role model to many women at PCL and in the construction industry because of her work ethic, leadership skills, how she handles herself in various situations, and her practical and tangible advice, states PCL.

TORONTO

Two female PCL employees have been recognized for their exceptional work in the industry.

Lilianne Dobbs

“My dad was an ironworker and he always said to me, ‘You should work in construction.’”

Growing up in a family of construction workers, Dobbs remembers always being around construction. When she was four years old, her dad built their family home and she helped by cleaning up scraps in their yard.

After high school, Dobbs thought she wanted to be a hairdresser, until one day when her dad said, “I’m taking your brother to the hairdresser’s union hall, are you coming?” The next thing she knew she was signing the papers and buying her first pair of steel-toed boots.

“While I was working my first labour job, I discovered how much I loved construction,” says Lilianne. “I joined the Carpenters’ union, went to trade school, and started my apprenticeship here.”

At 30, Lilianne was promoted to superintendent.

“I worked hard to prove myself and I always managed to make a good impression,” she says. “My strength has always been my people skills, that’s how I’ve grown my career over the years. I’ve built a good reputation and have earned the respect of my peers, managers and tradepeople.”

Looking back at her career, she says being a woman in construction never seemed unusual to her. “Compared to when I started, there are so many more women in construction now,” says Lilianne.

Lisa Kurina

“Lisa has been building her entire life. With a general contractor father, she had the opportunity to observe the intricacies of the construction industry, in her teenage years working on construction sites where she would help with schematics and drawings, permitting, and general labour, including forming and roofing,” reads the statement of support for her nomination.

Kurina has had leadership roles on some of PCLs most iconic projects in downtown Toronto, and has built a strong relationship with the Great Toronto Airports Authority, which has given PCL the opportunity to work on longstanding projects at Pearson Airport, including the recently announced GTA Baggage 2025 Master Agreement project.

“Lisa has mentored some of the strongest project managers that I know at PCL,” says Mike Love, PCL superintendent with increasing responsibility on Kurina’s projects. “I’ve watched several female and male colleagues grow in their career from co-ordinators to project managers under Lisa’s leadership. They learn, and take it and run with it, so much so, it has become evident that Lisa has built a department that everyone wants to come to and work in.”

Kurina has also been a role model to many women at PCL and in the construction industry because of her work ethic, leadership skills, how she handles herself in various situations, and her practical and tangible advice, states PCL.
BRINGING A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO HARD-WORKING WOMEN.

The construction industry needs more women in leadership - and the industry deserves it. People like the women above bring intelligence, ability, and work ethic to the workplace. The Ontario Association of Demolition Contractors is an advocate for Women in Construction, and we look forward to continuing to celebrate, hire, and train women in this field.

PICTURED ABOVE:

Standing Left - Tracy Nelson, Team Manager - Triple M Demolition Inc
Standing Centre - Margaret Taylor, Executive Director – Ontario Association of Demolition Contractors
Standing Right – Ashley Woodhams – Executive Assistant – JMX Contracting Inc.
Sitting Right – Francesca Palleschi, President – Curmann Contracting Ltd.
Sitting Left - Robin Priestly, Executive Vice President – Priestly Demolition Inc.
Grant excels at the ballet of construction project management

A first glance, ballet and construction would seem to be worlds apart. But there are more than a few connecting threads including the fact both are “very creative and very technical,” says EllisDon project management director Cara Grant.

“Ballet dancers have to know how to use the space they’re given to work in and so do project managers.”

Similarly, the same qualities of dedication, focus, and determination necessary for becoming a ballet dancer are the same attributes for being a successful project manager, says Grant, who has the rather unique status of achieving both positions.

She is both a National Ballet School of Canada graduate and former member of the National Ballet of Canada whose entry into that demanding profession began at a very young age.

Grant started taking ballet lessons when she was only three years old and then, at age 10, left her home province of Alberta and enrolled in the National Ballet School, which is based in Toronto.

“You’re too young at that age to make a career decision. But I had an intuitive feeling about what I wanted to do with my life.”

The National Ballet School is a boarding school and, as Grant describes it, a student’s progression from one grade to the next in a competitive and physically demanding environment is not easy or guaranteed.

“At the end of each school year you are evaluated and invited back or not. Only three of the students I entered the school with in Grade 7 made it to Grade 12.”

Following her successful graduation, Grant was hired by National Ballet of Canada and danced with the group for four years.

She then resigned and travelled to Europe for a year where she furthered her professional development by dancing with a number of different groups.

Shortly after her return to Canada, she slipped on the walkway at her home and broke her pelvis. “There were nerve issues and it took a long time to get over the pain.”

It also ended her career as a dancer. As she was only in mid-twenties at the time, that termination wasn’t as devastating as might have been if the fall had occurred later in life and, as Grant points out, she was becoming curious about other careers even before the accident.

“I was always interested in design and architecture and I remember walking along (Toronto’s) Wellington Street, looking up at the towers and wondering ‘How do they do that?’”

Similar to the motivation for enrolling in ballet school, it was an “intuitive process” which eventually led to studying design and architecture at Ryerson University where she obtained her Project Management certificate.

After graduating, she obtained a position with Genivar, now WSP, rising from project co-ordinator to project manager during her 10 years with that company.

“I managed projects from design to construction. But I wanted to get more involved in the actual construction side of things and two and a half years ago, I started making a few phone calls to EllisDon.”

Initially hired as a project manager, she was promoted to her present position as director of project management a year ago.

In that role she manages a number of different project teams. Some of her projects have included new constructions/renovations at Toronto’s Eaton Centre, St. Michael’s Hospital, and the Egale Centre, a residential/counselling support service facility for LGBTIQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, questioning and Two Spirit) youth.

Her portfolio also includes managing the recently completed Stackt Market, a modular retail/hospitality complex constructed from shipping containers close to the city’s waterfront.

Asked if she has been subject to any slights as a female in what, is still, a primarily male dominated industry, Grant says the goal throughout her career has always been to “keep professional and focused on the job”.

Although her ballet dancing days are long behind her, Grant still keeps connected with that side of her life by keeping in touch with former colleagues and sitting on the board of directors of Full for Dance North Festival, a non-profit organization which stages low-cost festivals at numerous venues including Toronto’s Union Station.

“Most people have one career. I have been fortunate to have had two.”

A partner you can trust

Managing the success of your construction business can be challenging in today’s evolving marketplace.

When you partner with Aviva for your surety needs, you can count on us to provide you with:

• Expert advice and consultation for your specific project
• Our commitment to help you meet your business goals
• A stable partnership focused on the long-term

With more than 100 years of expertise behind us, you can trust Aviva as your valued business partner.

Contact your broker to learn more.
GET MORE DONE™ with 200+ PRODUCTS in the DEWALT 20V MAX® line. All tools come with upgraded features, superior ergonomics and use Lithium-Ion batteries. For extreme performance, step up to the XR® series and get advanced electronics, extended runtime and faster application speeds.

Learn More at www.DEWALT.ca
Dan O’Reilly
Correspondent

While apprentice carpenter Andrea Buikema carves her way to a satisfying carpentry and design career, she still finds time to inspire potential future tradeswomen through the TRCA’s Girls Can Too summer program.

As a child, Buikema often accompanied her homebuilder father on site visits to his projects and she credits that experience for her interest and eventual entry into the construction industry.

“I always loved going to visit my dad on job sites as a kid. You can learn so much just from always being exposed to it.”

But that career door didn’t open right away. After graduating from high school, she enrolled in the two-year interior decorating program at Algonquin College. She took that training one step further by completing the one-year National Kitchen and Bath Association’s kitchen and bath course which the college offers to post-graduate students.

She then set out on her own and started a design firm, A. Buikema Design Co., where she worked with homeowners to create kitchens and bathrooms which suited their lifestyles.

“After working as a designer for a few years, I began to realize that I really wanted to know more about the installation side of things. All too often, I was reaching out to my dad, who is a carpenter, wanting to know more about renovations and how houses are put together.”

So she made the “big leap” and has been working as a carpenters’ apprentice for the past three years for her father’s construction company, Otto Buikema Carpentry, where she trains under him and a supervisor. She has one more academic session to complete before writing her Red Seal in general carpentry exam.

In addition to her full-time job, Buikema, 27, still finds the time and energy to operate her design company on a part-time basis and last year also started a small side project to teach women basic carpentry skills. Called the “Country Build Club,” it consists of workshops and videos which she sends out weekly to help clients with their own home projects.

And in 2017 she also accepted an invitation by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to be one of the instructors at its summer Girls Can Too program. Conducted at the Bolton Camp just outside of Bolton, its purpose is to teach basic construction skills to high-school female students. Buikema, who was a return instructor in 2018, will also be conducting two-day sessions a week over the four-week-long program this summer, as well as participating in a mother-daughter build day.

“We have a few different building projects this year,” she says.

“One will be a unique trail kiosk, a copy of the one we built last year. There is also a garden project, which I have not yet seen the plans for. Regardless of the projects, we always cover tool safety, how to use the various tools properly, and skillfully.

“By having the girls build the projects themselves, they are able to see how we break down the project into simple steps, which is something they can use time and time again, when they work on future projects. Often during lunch or downtime, I share with the girls what my job is like, and they’re able to ask questions about carpentry and schooling.”

As she lives in Prince Edward County, which requires staying at least one night in hotel, Buikema was asked to explain her motivation to drive all the way to Bolton. Her answer was that she “really loves the message behind the Girls Can Too program.

“I love that they (the TRCA and program sponsors) are giving girls an opportunity to try something that is typically only marketed to boys,” she says.

“We definitely have an opportunity to make an impact, and influence these girls to step outside that traditional role, and take on a job, or career, or even just a hobby that women weren’t always a part of.”

Buikema is currently exploring ways in which a similar program can be established in Prince Edward County.

Supporting women in construction

Building Rehabilitation • Concrete Flooring
Waterproofing, Roofing and Traffic Topping
Epoxy and Decorative Flooring • Mastic Asphalt

Tel: 905 670 1998 • Fax: 905 670 4662
Email: info@duron.ca • http://www.duron.ca