

Siobhan Mangal

July 8, 2019 Interviewer Delanee Daviau Camera Don Bouzek

Q: What is your local union and your position in it?

SM: My local union is the Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association, or OPCMIA for short, Local 222. I'm a third year apprentice through them as well as the Build Together representative.

Q: Where are you currently working, and what is your job?

SM: Oh, I guess I'm also a heat and frost insulator with Local 110. I'm a second year apprentice through them. My current job right now is a rope access insulator through Local 110.

Q: Tell me about your background.

SM: I was born at Sturgeon Hospital in St. Albert, Alberta, but I was always raised on the north side of Edmonton. My mom just liked that hospital and decided that's where we were going to go, so I was born there. I was raised on the north side in Hermitage area, which was kind of nice because it was the better area. But if you went ten minutes down onto 118<sup>th</sup> Ave. it was more the hoodlum area, so it was fun because I got to grow up with all the hoodlums but I was still the good girl with the hoodlums.

Q: Tell me about your parents.

SM: My dad was born in Guyana in Southern America and my grandma moved him and the four boys up to Canada when he was around 12 to 13. He's always just been in Canada since. My dad works for Maple Leaf Poultry. He used to be a union worker there, but then he got into a higher position so now he just works for the company. Then he met my mom, who was born in Canada but raised in France and brought back to Canada. He met my mom at Maple Leaf Poultry when

she was a worker there through the union as well, and now she's also a higher position so she's just through Maple Leaf now.

Q: Were you brought up in any specific cultural traditions?

SM: Not really. My mom's side is Catholic and my dad is Hindu, but they weren't ever very strong where I had to go to church every Sunday or I had to go to the temple every day. They were really open with just letting me go with my grandparents up until 12 or 13, and then they asked which religion I preferred, and I went with Hinduism. It was always a really slack kind of religion – if you wanted to go, you could go. Main rule is you don't eat beef, and do to others as you do to yourself. It was pretty easy, not anything getting tossed down my throat to make me not want anything. It was open to my own decision.

Q: What does your family think about the career decision you've made?

SM: They're happy. I used to work in a bar a lot, so when I went to my dad. . . When I make big decisions in my life, I kind of tell three important people and tell them my options, then I hear their perspective on it. I went to my dad and he's like, you obviously need to go. So they're pretty supportive. My dad used to be in a rigger. I don't think he was union or anything, he just did rig work up north when he was in his 20s. My brother is a plumber and pipefitter. My sister is an electrician, but she's non-union. My brother is union and my dad is pretty pro-union too, so they're like, good job.

Q: Did you have any formal education after high school prior to getting into the trades?

SM: No, I just have my high school diploma, and even then I had to take an extra year or two to get it, because I decided to be fun in grade 12 instead of serious. I turned into a hoodlum in grade 12 and dropped the ball, but at least I got it. I think it was a year or two later I decided to buckle down. I only needed three extra courses, so I got my high school diploma and then went into the trades.

Q: Tell me about the jobs you had before starting your apprenticeship.

SM: Anything and everything. When I was younger, I was in taekwondo and boxing, so I would train little kids' classes for \$10 or \$20 a class. I would just go in before the class that I would normally do, and train them two or three times a week. That was my first job where I got cash from, but that was like from 12 to 18. I really enjoyed that, but not serious money and not serious work. Then I went into the serving industry, and then I went into bartending and bottle service and shooter girl, so more of the nightlife, not so much like restaurant style. Then from there I was like, okay I either do this the rest of my life, which isn't a road you really want to do, or you kind of buckle down and try to find a serious job. My first serious job would be Ply Gem Windows and Doors, and would just be doing customer sales for them. But I got to deal with a bunch of builders, which was really cool. Before that, I also worked at Maaco auto body prep, which is the closest thing that was a trades job. But it was non-union and super repetitive and always in the same spot, so that job only lasted six months. But Ply Gem was good, Ply Gem was inside sales, customer service – salary, but not a very good salary. I didn't know what EI was until I got into the trades, and after that I was like, I could've just been on EI and make \$100 less than what I was making at a fulltime job. But it was nice, because you still got your three weeks paid vacation, Monday to Friday 9 to 5. There were spots that you could go if you stayed within the company, and I'm sure I probably would've gotten them. But it just seemed like it was a lot of time invested before you saw any kind of reward from it. After being there for a year, that's when I got the opportunity to go into the trades. So I sat down and was, okay either I stay here and work hard and then at most I can top out at maybe \$70,000 a year doing sales jobs, or I try out this trades thing and see where it goes, and one thing can lead to another. Dad said trades, so I went to trades.

Q: Who are your role models and mentors?

SM: Delanee is one of my mentors. She's pretty awesome. She gets to work in the trades and do all the cool things and get everybody together. I'm going to cry talking about you. She's pretty cool. I need to take a break here.

Q: Could you share a story that happened recently where you had to challenge yourself?

SM: Just the other week I was doing something with the ropes and my level 2 and level 3 were up on the ropes. They were trying to tell me over the radio what I needed to do as I was doing it, so sometimes you kind of get frustrated because you're doing it and they're saying it's wrong. So I did it the other way and he said over the radio to everyone, oh good job. . . oh now I'm forgetting. He's like, you're not just a pretty face. That set me right off, because you don't say that to a coworker, you wouldn't say that to a guy; you just don't say that. So by the time he comes down I just release on him, but my anger is making me cry. I'm just trying to explain to him, that's belittling somebody, you don't say that over a radio. You don't say, oh you're not just a pretty face. I get you may not see it as belittling, but it is. So that was a good incident on that one. I did do an intervention. I told him I didn't like it, I told him I didn't appreciate it, and if he does it again it's not going to be a good thing. He apologized and said he didn't see it as a belittling thing, but he took it in and understood. It hasn't happened since, so that's good.

Q: How did you become interested in a construction career?

SM: It actually started back when I was in grade 10 or 11. There's a RAP program in Alberta, the Registered Apprenticeship Program. Basically, you go and do a week of safety courses, your CSTS, and they get you all your basic materials that you need to go into the trades. After you pass everything, they give you a list of all the trade options available. You pick three of your top trades that you think you'd be interested in, and then they set up interviews for you. I believe they were non-union, because I don't recall going through the union for an interview. My first interview that I went to was for refrigeration mechanic. It was a specialized refrigeration mechanic, because it was for Safeway trucks and food moving and whatnot. So on top of being a specialized trade, it was an even more specialized type of trade too. I was 16 at the time. I went in and they thought I was going to be a dude, because of my name, so they assumed I was a guy. Then I walked in and I'm wearing Lulu Lemons and my jacket and my purse from school. I sit down and they're like, oh you're Siobhan. I'm like, ya I'm Siobhan. But the cool thing is that they actually gave me a tour, and the journeyman that I would've been working for really liked me, so he gave me a call back and said that I got the job. It was really exciting, but for a 16-year-old

Siobhan that was an overly big scare. I was told that the schooling was going to be in Calgary, so I had to start thinking about that. It was a really big step going from just working at a coffee donut deli kind of place to being into the trades, so I backed out. I just didn't respond, which is honestly probably the dumbest thing I've ever done. If I could go back to younger me and say, I know it's scary, but go, it probably would've opened a lot more doors a lot earlier. But at the same time, I don't think I would've been where I am now, so it's kind of good that I didn't go. So ya, I decided not to go into that trade, but ever since then I'm like, I think I'm going to go into the trades. I just didn't know how or when or where. Then later in life, my friend Justin Hildebrandt, who I went to high school with, he was a project manager for Brock. They had a lot of jobs going on and they were really short of people, so he sent me a proposal. He's like, this is what I can offer you; it's not going to be a fulltime thing, but this project is going to last at least six months. This is what I'm going to pay you, and if all goes well I'll just bring you to my next project. I'm like, okay. I didn't even know what fireproofing was. I thought I was going to be checking sprinkler systems. I had no idea what I was getting into. Basically Justin just gave me a step by step. He said, you have to go here and tell them that Justin Hildebrandt sent you and that you want to get onto this job. Little did I know I was going to my union that was about to get me a job. So I went into my union, same kind of deal. I think I was in a skirt with my purse and I had my nice jacket on. I went in and talked to Steve and he's like, I'll never forget you, because you came in with a big smile and I see your name and I had no idea how to say it and you're like, oh it's Siobhan, it's okay. He got me that job, and then ever since then Steve and I had a wicked connection. He's the BA for OPCMIA 222. Steve's the one who said I should be the Build Together representative as well for 222. Steve's gotten me onto a lot of jobs and he's always wanted me to do better. I think he also saw my initiative in it too. The reason I think I got Build Together was because I knew a job was ending, but it still wasn't going to end for another month or so, and I was already calling him like, hey Steve, I think this job ends October 4<sup>th</sup>; do you have anything ready to go for around then? He just found it absurd because it was like the end of August and he's like, I don't usually have people calling me for jobs while they're at jobs, Siobhan. I think it was just good timing, because there was a conference coming up and I think we lost the representative that was there; she moved out of country. So they just saw a younger female who was trying to be active and really interested in working, so that got me to Build Together. I don't know how we got onto this. But that's kind of how I got into the trades, is

through Justin and him having a job that I didn't know I needed but I definitely needed at that time. Then it's just been one thing after another after another, and it's been great.

Q: When you first started your apprenticeship, were you used to working with these types of tools and equipment?

SM: My very first job I wasn't, but they were basic hand tools. The material we were applying for fireproofing, it was just kind of like a putty so you just had to use a basic hand roller or snips. It was lots of just playing with your hand and tools that you would play with when you were little, so it was kind of cool. It was an easy way into the trades. It wasn't like I had to go in there knowing what a torque wrench was or all these other harder tools to use. I got scissors and knives, so they were tools that you already kind of knew how to play with or could figure out. Measuring tape, I had to have someone sit down and explain quarters and eighths. Unless you have someone sit down and explain it, you might not know right off the bat. So that wasn't too bad, and sometimes it takes a couple tries because you don't get it at first. But other than that, the tools that I had to use weren't hard to pick up on. On top of it, you have a mentorship program going into it, so you always had somebody with you who was showing you what to do and making sure you were doing it properly. Then even before they send you out into the field, they do a function test where they say, okay cut this and cut this and let me see you do this, so that they know you're competent to handle these tools. Even if they seem like they're just easy things, you can still cut your finger on them or you can put your finger somewhere and not realize you're cutting it with your own knife. So it was good that they actually took the time to be like, okay can I see you do this before I send you out there and hurt yourself.

Q: Tell me about your fireproofing apprenticeship program.

SM: It's a three-year program right now. It's not a red seal trade so it's not something you have to go to NAIT for. It's just a two-week program that's put on by our union. The union itself has their own training facility. You basically get a letter in the mail stating that you're up to go to school, these are your weeks you can go for. On so-and-so date, call in and let us know what week you would like to go. You put \$150 to hold your spot, which you end up getting back when

you go to school. It's just three years of two weeks each, which is nice, because there's other programs out there that are seven weeks long. Having to take off seven weeks from work sometimes is inconvenient and not doable for some families. OPCMIA is nice because it's just a two-week facility and you're still getting almost the same rate if not more than some of the red seal trades that are out there. So ya, it's pretty simple. Right now I'm a third-year fireproofers. I just finished my second week of schooling; I think I finished that in February. I just have one more two-week session, and I'm planning to do that in the beginning of 2020. Then after that, you're a journeyman. You get a certificate. You don't get a nice red sticker on it or anything, but it's still a certificate saying you've completed that apprenticeship.

Q: What is the tuition cost for your training?

SM: I don't actually know. I don't actually have to pay any type of tuition, so I'm assuming it's just put on through the union and paid by our dues that we all put in for each other. I don't actually have to pay anything, except for that \$150 to hold the spot, and that's just because they've had issues with people saying they're going to go and then dropping out a week before, and then there's students who could've went that don't have that option anymore. But you don't pay to go, you don't have to pay for any of your materials, they have all your tools and everything there for you to use. They provide you with all the equipment you need. You get to build what you want for your project, then you rip it all down and throw it out, and they don't ask you for a dime, which is awesome.

Q: Tell me about your insulating apprenticeship.

SM: My insulating apprenticeship is a little different. Insulating apprenticeships are seven weeks long. It's a three-year program as of right now; I believe September 2020 they might be changing it to a four-year program. That's not something I know for sure, it's just the rumours I hear around on site. So seven weeks, you have to do 1,500 hours. You can do your schooling whenever you want, but you won't get that raise until you have your hours. You have to have your hours, and then you can go to schooling, then you get your hours and go to schooling. So three years of seven weeks each. You get EI when you go to school, so it's not like you're not

getting anything. The program is around \$700 that you have to pay when you want to register for it. Books are about \$150 to \$250. If you're union, your union gives you your cheque at the end when you complete, with your books as well as your tuition. So you get all of that back once you're done.

Q: What was your very first day on a construction site like?

SM: It was so nerve-wracking. It was really fun, though. Everyone was super welcoming. The safety guy was hilarious. You sit down and they're like, we're not going to do anything all day and you're going to get paid for it. I'm like, this is great; where have they been all my life? So your first day is kind of nerve-wracking, especially when you don't really know what you're going into. Like I said before, I thought fireproofing was going to be sprinkler system checks. My friend's like, okay you're going to go to WorleyParsons mod yard. I'm like, what's a mod yard? So I googled it, because you had to see how it's going to take to get there, and I had a general idea. I'm like, okay still don't know, but cool. So got to work that morning. I went in, I met the safety guy. He sat me down and he's like, we're going to go through all your safety and we're going to go through everything, your JSAs. I'm like, what's a JSA? Job Safety Analysis, don't worry, it's not that fun. I was just so intrigued and ready to do everything. But you walk in, you see the mod yard, and it's just like a kilometer long with these structures of iron there. You're like, cool, what am I doing with that? Then you go in and they give you your JSAs, they get your paperwork filled out, they go and get you all your proper PPE. They let you know that if you don't feel like you're safe or if it's not a safe job, that you're obligated to refuse the work. They don't say, you don't do it if you don't want to. It's like, you have to by law refuse this work if you don't feel safe, and stop and tell your foreman and let your foreman know why you feel like it's unsafe, and then you guys work together to get the hazard eliminated. So it was really cool because they kind of . . . Like going in, you're really scared, you don't know what you're getting into, you have no idea. So just having that safety pushed onto you, like this is what we're going to do, this is how it's going to go, it's just like that's how you handle it. It just makes it easier and you're not, holy shit, what am I doing? Oh my goodness, I'm going to break something. It's like, okay if you break something, don't worry, we got it. This is how we're going to handle it. So it was good. It was able to help me calm down and realize I'm not in danger, everything will be okay. These guys are



going to make sure you're okay, because if anything, they hate paperwork more than you hate paperwork. They want to make sure you know what you're doing, because they don't want anybody to be hurt onsite. So it was pretty good. After I got all the paperwork and whatnot filled out and I felt a little bit better being there, they took me out to meet my foreman. Even my foreman stopped and he was like, okay so this is the job, we're going to do a walkaround. He said, I'm going to show you your muster and emergency meeting points, I'm going to show you what's going to happen if something goes wrong. I'm going to introduce you to your mentor, and your mentor is going to be a guy that is your journeyman, so he's going to tell you what to do. You're going to work with him, and then once your mentor tells me that you're good to work by yourself, then we'll switch up partners or put you on a different project. My mentor liked me a lot, so I never ended up leaving him for four months. It was him and I for two or three months straight, but we worked well together so it didn't matter. It was really easy from there, because you always had somebody with you. You always had someone smack your hand and tell you, no don't do that, if you were doing something wrong. They also were there to be like, okay this is how you do it, let me see you do it now. My mentor was awesome, Tim Giroux. He just let me be and showed me what to do. He's like, I'm going to show you the union way. We were working in hoardings that had Herman Nelsons pumping heat into them in the middle of summer, wearing tie-back suits and full facemasks. Dehydration was a really big scare. People were getting heat stressed. He was always like, we go for water breaks. It doesn't matter how many times you go for a water break. You're supposed to have at least one cup of water every 20 minutes. So they were very adamant. We would go up and do a spot, come down and get water. He's like, we want your safety as a priority. So that was good, because I was always so used to work, work, work; you don't want to stop, you always want to keep going. But these guys were like, ya do the job, but the job's not the priority. Get it done, but get it done safely. So that was really cool. I thought going for these water breaks was a bad thing. I was like, okay we gotta go back to work, we can't be sitting here. They're like, relax, it's okay, drink your water; we'll go back out once our bodies cool down. So that was pretty cool. They really were pushing safety a lot there. That was a really cool first day experience. It was really welcoming. It was nerve-racking being a girl and hearing the horror stories that some females have to endure. I didn't know what I was walking into, and then it was the best case scenario for me. It was pretty cool.

Q: Were there any other women on that job?

SM: There were quite a few other women there – at least a good five to ten; five for sure, right off the bat. They were on different projects. Once you did get to work with one of them, most of them were really opening and welcoming to you. Everyone was really friendly to each other. It was a really cool case. You have a lot of people there, over 100 or 200 people all working in a similar area and always in personal spaces. You go to a lunchroom and there's lots of people in the lunchroom. Once you started being there more often, everyone gets to know each other. All the women that were onsite were really awesome. They all gave you as much guidance as they could give you. They'd give you a heads up if there was any issues with certain people, just so other women were aware of what was going on. They were all really welcoming to you and knowledgeable. It wasn't ever like I was scared to talk to somebody. If anything, I feel like I may have been the girl people were scared to talk to, because I would just kind of try to stay by myself. But I think it's because I get too attached to people, so I was already sad about leaving my last job. I'm like, okay I know I'm not going to stay here for long, so don't get too attached to anyone, just stay to yourself. But you end up getting attached to everyone on your site and you're like, this is the best crew. Then the project ends and you all cry, well I cry, then you move on to the next one and end up seeing them again a year down the road at a project you didn't think you'd see them at again. So it's pretty cool.

Q: What is the typical process for you go get a job?

SM: Funny, because I didn't know how to do this before. For 222, it's more of a name hire. It's not a dispatch list, you don't see the jobs that are there. If you go to the monthly meetings, at the meetings they say what jobs are going on and how many members we have at each job. That's a good way to get to know, but it is more so a name hire union. You'd kind of have to get yourself onto the job, or if they are manning up you call your union and they have a list already, so they'll go through the list on who's not working and let you know what jobs are available if they're hiring and need people. So 222 was always through somebody that I knew, starting off with Justin Hildebrandt, and then just making your connections on your jobs and always getting those phone numbers and messaging them after that job ends – hey, do you know anything

available? Then they would put your name into the union and pull you as a name hire. For 110 there's a dispatch call. You go on the website and there's a list of jobs that are available, and you call into the union and say, I'd like to bid on call number 7 working at Albion. They say, okay I'll let you know, and they give you a call back within five to 10 minutes. They want to check to see if there's anybody else who asked to take that job who was ahead of you on the no working list, which means that they've been out of work longer. Once they get that checked and nobody else has asked for the job and you are close enough on the list, then you either get the job or they say, sorry you can't take this job. So dispatch for 110 and name hire for 222 is how you go about those things. If you ever have questions, you can always call the union and the union tells you what to do, which is what I did because I had no idea.

Q: Do you feel that you have equal opportunity for jobs as your male counterparts?

SM: For the most part, ya. I haven't had issues getting jobs. If anything, I feel like being a female in the trade gives you more opportunity to have jobs – depending who you are, though. If you're someone who's not showing up to work and if you come in and don't have a good attitude and you're not willing to work and you're not willing to learn, they're not going to get you to do more jobs. They're going to just say, well we can't rely on you; why are we going to put more things under your name if you can't handle it? For me, when I first started in the trades I was that first example – I wasn't as serious about it. I was coming to work every day but it wasn't like I was on time every day, just little things like that. But now, after four years and growing up a little bit, I'm at work every day, I'm going in and having the best attitude I can, and being positive and asking for opportunities. Going from fireproofing, I found out fireproofing's job was dying down, and then going to insulating. Whenever there's an opportunity to take a nightshift or something if an explosion or fire happened at work, I would raise my hand. I've never been told, no you can't go do it. They're like, ya you wanna do nightshift and you're volunteering to do nightshift for a week; you're going to get nightshift. I haven't been told, no you can't do it, we're going to get a guy to do it instead. Doing demolition, there's certain times where I'll be doing something and a male coworker will be like, oh hey, do you want me to hop in for you? I know they're trying to be helpful, but sometimes it's just maybe I take it as belittling, because I am doing the job and I felt like I was doing it well. I get they're just trying to

help, but it's like, just leave me alone. I have this, I got this, it's okay. But no, I've never not gotten something just because of me being a female. It could be other reasons that I deserved, because I wasn't there and on time and things like that, but not because somebody else could do it better or because I didn't deserve that opportunity. It's because I set myself up to get it or I set myself up not to get it.

Q: What makes you proud about your work?

SM: How positive I am going into it. I never go into the job going, shit, I'm gonna do really bad at this. Sometimes I am; sometimes I'm like, oh my god, I don't think this is going to go very well. But sorry, can I have the question again?

Q: What makes you proud about your work?

SM: I'm proud about my craftsmanship and the positive attitude I have going into it. I think the positive attitude helps my craftsmanship. It's always nice doing something and having someone say, I'm impressed, especially when that person says, I'm not impressed often but I'm impressed by this. It's a fan girl moment. You're like, you like my work; I did that and you're impressed by it. It's awesome having a skill that people are impressed by. It's kind of heartwarming. You're just like, oh my god, I did something good; pat on the back. People always say working in the trades you don't get that, and you don't. You don't ever expect to have somebody praising your work all the time. In the trades, you actually don't get favoured very often. You go in and they expect you to do the job, and you do the job and that's it. You're not going to get, good job buddy, all the time. But when you do do something and you do get noticed once in a while, it totally makes it worth it. You're just like, holy shit, a guy who's been in the trades longer than I've been alive is saying that you're doing a good job. It makes you really proud of what you're doing and it makes you want to continue to do that well. You're doing shitty work and somebody sees it and you hear them, oh who did that? Then you're like, oh I did that. You're just like, it doesn't feel so good. So you want to do good work because you want to hear good stuff about your good work.

Q: When you're out in public or meeting new people, what is their reaction to your being a tradeswoman?

SM: They never believe that I'm in the trades. Even when they see me at work it's always like kind of jokes. They don't take me as a joke, but they find it kind of amusing because I'm this little girl wearing a backpack and rain boots and always smiling. You think of trades, especially working up north at Syncrude in an industry like that, you think of burly old men with the big bellies and the grumpy face. Then there's me – ponytail sticking up top off my head, probably some type of fiberglass scratching on my face, and I have my backpack. I'm just pretty stoked on being there. I forgot the question again.

Q: What is the general public's reaction to you being in the trades?

SM: They find it kind of entertaining at first. They never believe that a 25-year-old, especially me, they think I don't look like I could do things in the trades. Then they see me hanging off the ropes with a jackhammer taking off cement that weights probably more than I do, and I'm hanging there holding onto this trying to put it into the bag to lower down. You're trying to do it all under control. I get a lot of people saying, I'm so impressed with what you're doing; good job, keep up what you're doing. They're like, we need more people like you to do this. They want to see it. They do want females in the trades. Having girls there makes the environment so different. Guys aren't so, oh testosterone, I've gotta be tougher. It's just kind of a little bit softer and easy going and realizing, hey guys, this is work, we don't have to be so serious all the time. Ya that spot sucks, but it's funny because you just hit your head trying to get out of it. They need someone to show them there is some light in this shitty, dark Syncrude hole. Being that light is fun, because they just don't see it too often.

Q: Bringing that smile to the job really changes everything.

SM: Ya, they're just so set on just being negative coming to work and going, uh, I'm at work again. When I go to work I try to take in my surroundings. A lot of the guys in camp go to work and then they go straight home. Some of them have vehicles, so they'll drive to town. But when

you go to town, usually you're going to go and just have some drinks and get some food and come back. I like to go for adventure. I have my car and I realized Syncrude has a reclaimed hill there called Gateway Hill. They have a 5 km trail and all these trees planted, and they're showing what they did with the land and the back story on it. So I'll go for walks there and then I'll go down by the lake and do things. When I go to work and the guys are like, oh what did you do last night, we didn't see you at the gym, I'm like, oh I went for a run over at the trail head over there. They're like, what are you talking about? I'm like, you guys seriously drive by this trail head every single day to work. It's there, and it's a trail; it literally says, trail head. They're like, we've never seen it. So it's just nice to try and show them, ya you are stuck in this shitty environment, but it is what you make it. You can go for walks, you can go and get out of there. Ya there might be bears, but you gotta take precautions; it's not that bad. Being with the community and being a female in this industry is pretty cool, because you get to bring a different outlook on a things and a little bit more positivity than all the men that are there. They just tend to be negative and down on themselves, and sometimes you need somebody to help you show that it's not so bad.

Q: It also gives them someone to confide in at times.

SM: And it's just that connection. As weird as it sounds, guys being up north tend to lose that connection, because it's just their surroundings and their environment. They don't need that connection, but it's just easier at work if you feel like you can connect with what you're doing. I feel more like the little sister of the group. I'm always the one pulling pranks and trying to make people smile or giving someone a wet willy or just things you probably shouldn't be doing onsite, but they're just the little things that make the morale a little bit better. You gotta remember, ya it sucks, but you gotta remember you're still a human, you still gotta have fun here. Ya there's lots of rules preventing you from having some of that fun, but you still gotta make the best of the situation. Being the little sister onsite is always the fun thing, until they start doing it back to you and you're like, what did I start, why did I do this? Then you say, I'm so sorry, and you raise the white flag, but by then it's too late.

Q: What kind of support do you experience from your union?

SM: Tremendous support. They're awesome – 222 is great; I love 222. If I ever have issues, they're super easy to deal with. My boyfriend right now, he's not sure if he wants to be in the trades or not, but he does want to have them in his back pocket. However, financially he can't afford his dues and things like that. So he called them to explain his situation and they're like, we don't want your money, don't worry about it. We'll just put everything on hold. If you want to come back later on, just let us know. We'll take you back, you're a wicked worker. It was just such a relief because my boyfriend is going through hard enough times as it is. The last thing you want to do is feel like you're messing up bridges with your job. I'm like, all you gotta do is talk to them; they're super understanding. Just give them a call and let them know what's going on, that's all they want to know, and they'll work with you. So he called them and he was like, best case scenario. He's like, I don't have to worry about anything. They said they'd take me back when I'm ready, and they were great about it. Even before that, I would just go in to see how they're doing on my days off, and they always take the time to sit me down and see how I'm doing, what things are like at my worksite, what things I can make better, what I would want better. They tell me about opportunities that they're coming up with and things that they're working on. They like to keep me involved. I don't know if it's just because I'm making the effort to be there and I'm showing the initiative that I want to, but they're awesome to deal with. They're so inspiring for me. They're just like, keep doing what you're doing, we like what you're doing. For 222 for example, I'm not working through them right now. But I am working through a different trade and they're still like, keep on sister, at least you're working and at least you're trying to work union. They're still happy for me. They always want me to do better and they see that I'm expanding my horizons. They're never going to be like, don't you dare do that. They want you to do better and they're there to provide you with what they can to help you do better, which is pretty cool. It's just like an extra support system that I didn't really think of as a support system until talking about them. They're awesome.

Q: Have you ever been involved in a grievance?

SM: No, I haven't been involved in a grievance.

Q: What is your relationship like with the other women in your local?

SM: They're great. I haven't had any bad experiences with the other women in the local. We try to support each other when we're going to schooling. One of the other women in my 222, she's also in 110 as well. I went to schooling for my first year, whereas she just challenged it. I set up a date night with her and we went over all my first year stuff. I gave her all my first year homework and my binder so she could just study on her own. She went did the test and passed, so she didn't have to go to her schooling for year one. Now she did her journeyman – she did her second and third year back to back. Now she's a journeyman insulator, which is unreal, and a fireproofer as well. She's like, Siobhan, I got my schooling. She's like, I have all the books for you so when you go to do your second year, let me know and I'll bring the books. They're awesome. They all support each other. I think if anything, the girls are more there for each other than the guys are there for the girls. On top of it, I feel like there's more cattiness between some of the guys and drama between the guys than there ever is with any of the girls. All the girls are super chill, just do their own thing. They're there for you if you need them to be there for you, and aren't if you don't want them there. They just do their own thing. No one is out to get the other. Sometimes you get a couple bad apples, but you just let them rot out and you're good to go.

Q: So true, they always do.

SM: Ya, they don't end up lasting too long. It's not like us doing anything, they on their own don't come in and just slowly disappear.

Q: What is Build Together?

SM: Build Together is a group of females. They represent unity, the minorities, females in the trades. They try to bring unity between the trades, so we hold different events and charity events. We try and do things with women in shelters, and just try to bring everyone together and show that it's not union versus union, but we're all doing union things together to work with each other. We try to bring better ideas to the site and what we can do to make things



better for each other. They're a pretty cool group. I've gotten so many cool experiences working through them. It just doesn't seem like it's going to stop any time soon, which is a super cool thing to know. Being 25, it's like, this is just the start. I've only been with them since September, and all the good things in my life up to now was just like a skyrocket. They wanted me to be in Build Together in September, and it's just been nothing but positives ever since then, and awesome experiences. You learn so many things and they ask you to do so many things. You do projects that you didn't think you would ever get to work on, and you just keep on learning and trying to be better. They really are there to promote you to do better, and they set you up with the tools that you need to take those leadership roles. It's all in all a really cool group of women.

Q: What has been one of your favourite experiences with Build Together so far?

SM: The CBTU conference, the Ottawa conference with the Build Together group, was unreal. We got to meet all the other Build Together girls as well, well not all of them, but the selected ones that got to go to the Canadian Building Trades Union conference. We had a sit-down of all the Build Together groups across the country to hear what each group has done and what they're doing and how they're going about each group in each province, and how they're working with their governments and what they're doing and where they're giving their money back to and what projects they're working for society, and how they're just building. It's unreal. You never realize. The group I'm a part of, I just thought about my Alberta group and all the girls that I have here and how great they are just for life. If I ever have issues, I can go to them. Then I go to the CBTU conference and we're at a board table and we have females all around the board talking about the things that they're doing in their own provinces, and what they're building and what we have going on. I didn't realize there was like this whole big community behind it until I was there. I'm like, holy shit, there's a lot more other women in this; it's not just me. All these women have the same mindset on wanting to be better and do better and what we can do to make it more accessible for women to be in the trades. The CBTU conference with the Build Together team was a big highlight for me so far. It opened up so many doors, and I got to see and learn a lot of things through them from that opportunity. So that was a good one.

Q: How did you get involved with Build Together?

SM: I got involved with Build Together because Steve from Local 222 decided to submit me as a representative or as an option to be our Build Together representative. Our original Build Together representative for 222 moved out of the country, so she was no longer an active member and they needed to replace her. I think it was all in all just lots of hard work and good timing. Timing, I think, was everything with me being a person that they chose to be with Build Together. Being at work, I knew that my job was ending within the month, so I called Steve to just kind of give him a heads up that I was going to be looking for work and to keep me in mind if a project came up near this time. So he saw that I had some initiative and that I was trying to get work and that I wanted to continue working, which he saw was a good thing. He also knows that I'm a bubbly person that would be interested in something like this. Just Steve knowing who his people are in his union, he was able to kind of be like, Okay Siobhan would be probably a good option to put as our Build Together representative. So Steve submitted my name as an option. George, our business manager, approved it, and then they basically called me. I think they were nervous that I wasn't going to like it, because they kind of did it in a selling way. They were like, hey, we want you to do this. It's not much work. You have to go to four meetings a year. You call in at the end of every month to do a call-in meeting over the phone. But if you do this, we'll take you to Jasper. I'm like, okay. I'm like, Jasper, and all you have to do is a couple call-ins and go and see these ladies? I'm like, sure. I think they were nervous that I didn't want to do it, so they were definitely like, okay you gotta do this, but don't worry, we're going to take you to Jasper Fairmont, it's going to be worth it. I'm like, it's definitely going to be worth it.

Q: Was it worth it?

SM: It was so worth it; oh my gosh, it was so worth it. So Mr. good old Steve got me into this Build Together group.

Q: Outside of work and your life as a construction worker, what does your life look like?

SM: I have a boyfriend and two cats. We met in the trades, which is ironic, because going into the trades the first thing in my head was, I do not want to be one of those girls who gets a name

for dating multiple guys in the industry. I just didn't want that name, I didn't want to be known as that person, because that's not who I am. So I made it very clear off the bat that I was never going to date a guy in the trades. That was my rule to myself; it wasn't going to happen. I met my boyfriend through the trades, only guy I went on a date with, and now we've been together for two years. So that one worked out well. Other than that, I like to go snowboarding, I like hiking, I'm very outdoorsy. One of the factors about going into the trades was that I was going to be able to live this lifestyle that I wanted to live. Sometimes you're working seven days on and seven days off, so you can have a full week of going out and doing whatever you want. That gives you a day to drive somewhere and set up camp. You can camp for three or four days, do a hike, come back, and you're still rejuvenated and good to go to work. If I worked Monday to Friday 9 to 5, that was not something that was going to happen. I tried to go snowboarding when I worked Monday to Friday 9 to 5, and I always ended up calling in on Monday or Tuesday, well Monday but sometimes Tuesday – I have food poisoning. Oh ya, those were good times. But ya, just lots of outdoorsy things, traveling and hiking. I like to do boxing. I've always been a hands on outdoorsy physical kind of lifestyle, that's just always how I've been. So trades was kind of a good balance for that, because I was able to, like it sucks when you have to do 24 and fours and things like that, because you don't get a life. You feel like it's not worth it and you miss your family and you're always away. It gets really hard and straining when you are away. But it makes it worth it, because when you do rotations like that, at other times in your life you're able to take off like a month or two and you don't have any repercussions for asking to take off a month or two. I'm taking August off, a full month, and I'm getting an ROE so I'm still going to get paid while I'm off. My company has no problem with me taking time off. They're like ya, see you in September. If I was with Ply Gem they'd be like, oh well we're going to use your three weeks paid vacation and then we're going to take some of your paid vacation from next year to cover it or we're not going to pay you at all. They would make a big stink about it, because who's going to do your job, we don't have somebody to do your job. So trades definitely was able to let me live a life that I want to live. I can take as much time off as I want. I can ask for a layoff and still be on good standing with the company, and if they do need somebody when I come back they're usually more welcoming to take me back as long as you communicate with them. Working in the trades definitely gives you a lot more to live a life of your own, even though sometimes it doesn't seem like it.

Q: Do you foresee any challenges with starting a family one day with your life in the trades?

SM: I do. I haven't thought too much about it, but I kind of hope for best case scenarios. I'm hoping by the time I do want to have kids that I can be not so much on the tools position but maybe I can be more on a desk job position or I can do planning. There's times when I feel like, oh my goodness, what am I going to do in the trades? I'm not going to be able to be on tools, but there's so many other options working in the trades. It's not just tools. I can go to project planning, I can do walkdown of jobs. As long as you're good with the company that you're in with, usually they work pretty well at trying to suit your lifestyle. There are times where I'm like, shit, how am I going to get a job and be pregnant and do the job without harming a baby, and then take time off and still come back? You just have to kind of plan it right and make sure you talk with the company. I'm still worried about it though, because it doesn't ever go the way you want it to go. But it's something that I'm going to have to deal with when I get there. I'm hoping that by the time I do have kids I'll have enough saved up where I can take a step back for three or four years and just sit and be a mom. But at the same time it just sucks, because I can't work part time in the industry. If I do want to work in the industry, I'm not going to be able to work up north. It instantly limits everything you can do. You're basically going to be stuck doing either commercial work or infrastructure within this town. But trying to get work inside the city is sometimes hard. If I have a baby, it's really tricky. There's not a good way of staying for sure in the trades being a parent, without being in a higher up position. Unless they have a position to give you, you're not going to get it. It's going to be tricky.

Q: Do you think it's harder for tradeswomen to walk away from the work and level of achievement than it is for other women?

SM: Ya, especially women. Not saying that men aren't excited and there for their jobs, but I feel like women really get attached to their jobs. They really want to do a good job and they really want to show people that they can do a good job, just because we don't usually get that opportunity very often. So leaving a spot where we are doing really good is just like, shit, how am I going to get back to this position again when I come back? It's like four years in the making

of getting to this spot, and then it's just like, oh I'm going to leave for four years. Construction industry changes so quickly, super quickly. You don't think you're getting laid off one day, and there's a project that you're working on, and then a week later you're getting laid off because that project got cancelled. You can't have a secure spot in the industry going forward. It's super ongoing at how it is at that time and place. So it's hard to work four years toward something and getting a really good name in this industry and getting up there, and oh I'm going to leave for four years. You come back and there's none of the same people even there anymore. It's not going to be the same when you get back sometimes. You don't feel like you're going to go back to what you left.

Q: Tell me how you got into rope access, and what is it?

SM: I got into rope access. Originally I was working at Albian Sands for Aluma. We as insulators were losing a lot of the jobs to rope access technicians, because it's a lot cheaper to have a rope access technician rig up his own ropes. Sorry. It's a lot easier to have rope access technicians rig up their own ropes, climb up the ropes, do the job, and then get down. If you're going through scaffolders, you would have to pay for the scaffolding, you have to pay for the scaffolds to get erected, the people doing the job. It was just a budget-wise way and more sensible to use rope access, and on top of it some of the positions in the pipe racks that you need people to get to you can't even build scaffolding for. When I was at Albian we were losing a lot of work to rope access companies, so Aluma started their own rope access company and they were providing training for guys that wanted to do it. But they were just starting off with a selected few guys that had been working with the company for a while. Jimmy Barasa, he was our project planner at Albian, but he was also on the tools. He was a mastermind, he could do anything and do it ten times faster than anybody else could do it. Jimmy Barasa got to go do his rope access course and then he kind of came back to work telling us about it. I was always so interested by it; I just thought it was the coolest thing ever – you got to climb ropes all day. It just seemed like nobody was ever on them about being production pushy. They just had the job that they had to do, they got to go do the job that they had to do, and nobody really questioned them or got in their way. I'm like, these are the gods of site, I want to be one of them. They always got the cool coveralls, too; the coveralls were always the cleanest. I'm like, that's where I need to be. So Jimmy Barasa

did his rope access and then he told me that they were looking at getting more people into the rope access, so he kept my name in his mind. We ended up losing that job. The contract was coming to an end and we didn't end up getting it re-signed, so there was layoffs. I think there was 30 or so people, and only six guys got a transfer to Syncrude from Albian. I got one of the transfers over, and Jim Barasa went and started working straight with the rope access guys onsite for Syncrude. Very quickly he became a foreman there, so then he would always tell me, hey they're putting on a course this month, message this guy. He was very adamant on making sure I was aware of what was going on, and he gave me the proper contacts on who to get a hold of. There was a couple times in January and February I would call these random numbers saying, hey I'm so and so. You can kind of tell they're like, ya whatever. The courses never ended up happening. Layoffs happened so this course didn't happen, so just rescheduling. Finally in April Jim Barasa told me, hey there's a course going on and this one's definitely happening; message this guy. I'm like, give me an email, because customer service skills come into play. I'm like, give me an email, I'm going to woo this guy and I'm going to get onto this course. In the email I was super professional. Hey Mr. Skippington, my name's Siobhan Mangal, I'm currently working on the maintenance contract at Syncrude on the ground. I'm a union worker, 110 member, as well as a 222 member. I was aware that they were doing fireproofing removal as well as insulating work, so I was letting him know, hey I can do fireproofing and I can do insulating. You can use me in both as long as you get the dispatch and proper paperwork going through for either or. I'm like, I'm really interested in this course. I got an email back the same day like, we're definitely going to put you down, the course is this date. I also had the Canadian Building Trades Union conference that month and I got super nervous because he told me it was going to be at the end of the month. I'm like, shit shit shit. I'm like, I'm not going to miss this conference, but the rope access course is something that's really going to push my career forward. So I let him know, I'm really grateful that you want me to do this course, I'm super happy you have me in mind. I'm not trying to tell you how to do your job sort of deal, but I'm just letting you know that I'm not available these dates due to this circumstance. He was aware that it was a work related thing, it wasn't that I was just going out to party for a week. I don't know what he did, but he just had it scheduled so it wouldn't interfere with my week off that was gone. I went to the CBTU conference, I came home, and then I went and did my rope access course back to back. He got me in the course. There was four level 1s and there was four level

1s that were going to their level 2s. Three out of the four passed of the level 1s, so I passed, and out of those three guys I was the only one who got to go and start working off ropes right away. I think the course ended on Saturday, I drove home Saturday night and was home Sunday, drove back up to Fort Mac on Monday, and started right off the bat climbing ropes on Tuesday. I was like, okay this is quick and this is happening super quick. But it was awesome because it was just like you either jumped and flew or you didn't. But they provided me with people who have been doing rope access for quite a while, so I knew I was safe. I trusted the gear. I watched them rig the ropes, so I knew what ropes I was climbing. There was always somebody there to make sure if I wasn't comfortable to call me down or just say, hey it's okay, you don't have to do this if you don't feel comfortable doing it. So I started into the ropes right off the bat. Thanks Jimmy Barasa, because he gave me Chris Skippington's email, and I even cc'd him in it so I was like, you can use Jim Barasa as a reference. He was cc'd, got that email, got that going, then right away ropes and fireproofing removal. It was definitely straining on the body. It took me two or three weeks. I couldn't go to the gym while I was doing ropes, that was not happening. But now after doing it for just over two months, I'm now able to go back to the gym. My body is used to carrying the extra 30 pound harness around with me. Now it's pretty cool, because I started doing fireproofing removal. When you're doing removal, you need to be in control of the cement that's falling. It's sometimes heavy cement, sometimes it's just like a intumescent fireproofing so it's not too bad; sometimes it just crumbles. But you still have to have control of the area. You have people and other coworkers walking below you. You have people who get excited about seeing someone climbing ropes, so they'll just stand there and watch sometimes. You kind of get used to having an audience. It is a safety issue, you are doing things that aren't going to be safe for people around you. You have to have grounds guys, you have to have a level 3 making sure everything's going properly and looking out for those hazards that you can't see. Sometimes you'll be working on the rope and then this rope is passing a hot pipe. Sometimes if you swing underneath or something, the rope can get caught on this hot pipe or steam trace. You don't want to have one of your ropes cut by accident, so you have a lot of safety precautions so things like that don't happen. Going into the fireproofing removal on ropes was really cool because you got to do all your own rigging, got to check out the job and figure out how you would do the job. That project finished just recently, so they kept me. The bonus of having two trades is that they can move you around to where they need you. Some of the rope

access guys didn't have other trades, they were just rope access guys, so there were about nine of the rope access guys who got laid off because they couldn't use them elsewhere. But me having those extra trades, they're like, oh we can put you with insulating ropes. Now I'm doing insulation off of ropes. If they don't have any insulating rope jobs for the day, they just ground me and I go do regular ground insulating jobs. Fireproofing is kind of tricky because there's some fireproofing done in insulating, but you just don't want to cross jobs that should be through the unions. You always have to be mindful of what you're doing. When I found out about fireproofing removal, I wasn't sure if it should be something under, if I should be a 222 member. So I called the hall and talked with them, talked to the guys onsite. Removal isn't a jurisdiction on a fireproofing job, so anyone can do a fireproofing removal. Being an insulator, it was okay for me to still do this work. You always just want to make sure you check what you're doing, because you don't want to step on people's toes, because that's how you also get bad names and things. You don't want to upset people for silly things like that. So now I'm back on insulating and it's been pretty cool. You get to literally swing from thing to thing to thing.

Q: Can you give me an example from your training sessions?

SM: You need to get used to not having personal space, which was something I wasn't really warned about prior. Going into the rope access course, you have to do a rescue. You realize very quickly that when you are rescuing somebody personal space isn't a thing. You need to get this person who you don't know what the situation is – they could've had a stroke, they could've had heat stress, something bad could've happened. Either way, you need to get this person down. You don't think about personal space. We're practising rescues and I see the instructor go up and then I see one of the other levels go up as well, and they perform the rescue. When you do a rescue, you're in your own harness and then you have the rescuee on their ropes. Basically you have to attach the rescuee onto you and lower him onto you so his weight is all right below you so you don't have to try and hold him or anything. You attach him to yourself and then you lower him down onto you. But when he's onto you, basically you're kind of straddling him. The rescuee's head will be here, his arms will be around your legs, and you are above him and very close. Then once the rescuee is fully attached to you and below you, you just lower yourself down, so the rescuee goes down with you once you get him off of his ropes. So you lower



yourself down, and once you're down the rescuee lays on the ground and you kind of step away and unbuckle yourself, then you go behind him and continue to lower the rest of him down onto you so you can keep the rescuee upright. Personal space, there was none. It was something that you kind of just have to get used to. You just don't have personal space. When you're in a fight or flight situation and need to rescue somebody, you don't care about personal space, you just care about getting that person home. You just push it out the door. You realize you're all professionals here. If you feel personally that somebody's not doing something right (which I haven't been in that situation, thank goodness), but I assume you would do an all stop, you would get yourself away, express your feelings, say I'm not comfortable with this, you are doing these so and so things. Then you continue on. But for me, nobody was ever making it awkward. Everyone made it as comfortable as could be. I got to work with a guy that I'm comfortable with, because him and I worked at work together. It wasn't weird or anything. We kind of laughed about it because it was awkward at first, like we're all little kids sometimes so we were like, okay this is weird, no personal space. But you get over it. You realize they're training you because you need to be trained on this. These things can happen. So you just be professional, you move on. If you aren't comfortable with something, you just say it. They're there to listen to you and it's your own body, so who gives a shit; you do what's good for you. Even at work there's times when you have to do buddy checks and function checks. They want to make sure you have your harness on properly. You don't want to have something twisted the wrong way so that if something happens and you need access to it you are able to have access to it at that time. When you're up in the air you have only what's on you and you have to make do with what you've got. If things are tangled and you don't have access to it, then there's a potential for dropped objects. You don't want dropped objects at that height – it makes a fatality at some point. You have to be very careful, which is why you do buddy checks. Sometimes buddy checks get too much. I like my own space and I get that they need to be done, but at times when you're not paying attention and you have somebody come out of nowhere and start finicking with your harness on you, you just kind of take a step back. I think there needs to be that communication, like hey, I'm going to do a buddy check on you; is that okay? Then you say yes or no, and you proceed. When you're just kind of working and going about your stuff, sometimes I would forget about a buddy check and one of the guys would come and just start checking. It's not like they're purposely trying to make me feel uncomfortable, it's just that's what they do in this

environment. That's what they do with the other guys too, but it's just hard not be like, stop. They're doing what they need to do but at the same time it's like, you didn't ask me if it's okay to be in my space. I get you're doing what you need to do, but next time just let me know you're going to do this. When you just have hands on you or near you touching you or the harness that's attached to you, sometimes you're like no, no, no, you don't need to be doing that. But yes, they do need to be doing that, but you need to be doing it with consent. Sometimes I think the guys just need a little bit of a reminder. I think they're just like, okay we've got to get the job done. You're doing your thing, they just do the quick buddy check. But sometimes it's like when you have somebody doing it two or three times a day you're just like, stop, hands off, take a minute, breath, recollect, realize you're at the jobsite just getting shit done. Communicate, hey next time if you're going to do a buddy check, let me know. Then you move forward. If it continues to be an issue, that's when I decided to like, okay did I already remind them once or twice don't do this? I haven't had any personal issues but this is how I would take it. Then if they continue to do things that aren't okay or that don't make me comfortable, then that's when I decide to bring it up further. You always want to give the person a chance to fix it themselves. If you just automatically go up further, you just take that option right out from underneath them. They might not even see it being an issue. If it's a guy and he's just doing a buddy check, for him that might just be routine. You just always do that when you're on ropes because you always want to make sure the person you're working with is okay. So they might not see it as an issue until you let them know that's an issue for you. That's how you kind of deal with personal space. You don't have any.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the camp experiences?

SM: Camp jobs are pretty good. I don't mind camp life. It's nice because you get into a good routine. Being surrounded by so many males sometimes becomes a lot, especially for me because I like to be by myself and do my own thing. When you're in camp you just feel like you're getting watched all the time. You always have someone's eyes on you or there's someone who wants to come and talk to you. You just kind of learn how to flow with it. I've gotten very good at the RBF, the resting bitch face. It's kind of funny because at site I'm very, not on site. If I know you and I work with you on site, you know I'm a very approachable friendly person.

However, you kind of have to swim the sea at some point. You don't want everyone trying to talk to you all the time; it's draining for somebody. I just don't make eye contact, I just pretend I don't see them. I honestly just pretend I'm in my own world unless I know you, and then I'll approach you and talk to you myself. The resting bitch face has been working pretty well.

There's a couple times you might have to say something to somebody, like what are you looking at, or take a picture, or don't take a picture, please stop. But camp life isn't too bad, it's just you have to kind of make it with what you've got. The resting bitch face works because I didn't talk to any of the rope access guys beforehand because I'd never worked with them, so I would only talk to the ground guys. However, I would always feel the rope access guys kind of always, I could tell that they wanted to talk but never would talk. We never had any work together, so why would they talk to me? Then I ended up going to ropes, so now they all can talk. My level 3 on my first job was actually, ya I'm not saying you're a bitch, but like I thought you were a bitch. I'm like, why would you think that? He's like, well you just looked like you didn't want anyone to talk to you. He's like, you can tell you didn't want anyone to come near you. He's like, that's why nobody ever comes near you. I'm like, perfect, it's working. That's exactly what I want to happen. It's not that I don't want people to talk to me, but it's just I don't. I'm coming here to work, I come to work. I'm not coming here to be your friend. I will if I have to work with you, because at that point we are friends. If something happens to me, I hope you're my friend and you are going to save me or at least do the proper procedure to get me out of there. You can't be friends with everyone on site. I know everyone kind of wants to be your friend sometimes, but it's just too draining and too much. You just try and keep to yourself as much as you can. Be polite to people when they're talking to you. My boyfriend wants me to stand up for myself more, because I tend to just, if something inappropriate is said, I just kind of like, I used to just laugh it off or walk away. I didn't know how to handle myself in those situations. I sometimes myself make inappropriate jokes, so I'm just, ha ha, that wasn't funny. But I don't know what to do, so I'm going to turn away now. But instead, my boyfriend's like, it's okay to tell people to f off, Siobhan. You are allowed to say those things. He's like, you don't have to be nice to everybody. So that's something that I myself is working on, knowing what I'm comfortable with and where to draw the line and let you know, hey that's not okay, I don't find that funny. It wasn't a joke, no one's laughing, so don't say that again. You just kind of take it play by play. You can't really expect everyone to be perfect all the time, so you can't unleash on them. But if it's

something that's repetitive in camp and it starts to seem like harassment, then definitely get it dealt with at that moment. But I've been really lucky, I haven't had to deal with too much of the bad side of camp. Usually my boyfriend was always with me in camp, so nobody would ever say anything. But you have to kind of learn to stand up for yourself and let people know what your limits are and what you find disrespectful.

Q: Do you find a difference in camp, being with Jarad or without Jarad?

SM: No. At first I thought it was a little different because I'd always have a guy with me. But even now I think just the fact of how I present myself, people don't bother me. I just stick to myself. Sometimes you'll have a guy staring at you too long, and then at that point you just stare back and them awkwardly until they stop. But it was more comfortable for me when Jarad was there. It was great when Jarad was there, because I would just have Jarad. But it was also really hard for him to be there too. Not only am I having to deal with seeing these guys look at me, now my boyfriend has to deal with these guys looking at me. That's not easy for anybody to take in. Nobody ever wants to see your significant other being stalked like a piece of meat sometimes. It sucks. It sucks not having him there, but you kind of have to realize what your line is and deal with them as it comes up. I think I've been doing really well, because I don't have a bad name in the trade. I've been working really hard and everyone seems to respect me. If anything, if you do it right a lot of these guys will attack the other guys that are being disrespectful to you, because they're like my big brothers. Some of them are even like, is this Jarad guy the right guy for you? I'm like, I've known Jarad longer than I've known you, so yes he definitely is. I don't think you're the right guy to be saying that. But if you do it right, all these guys just want to protect you and make sure you're doing okay. Everybody in the trade just wants to see you do better. They all want to see you pushing better, doing better, making that next job prettier, redeeming yourself when you do the bad jobs, and they're all there to congratulate you when you do do a good job. One of the guys the other day was only supposed to take one or two days to do this job, and it ended up being a three or four day thing. Everyone's like, why don't you have this done yet? He had this job to finish and he didn't, and it took him a lot longer. Then finally after he had it done, everyone over the radio is like, good job buddy, you did it, you redeemed yourself. There's lots of teasing but it's the fun teasing.

Sometimes if you're in a bad mood you don't find it funny at all, but then the next day you're like, okay I was being a tight ass yesterday; that was really funny. I did do good, it's cool. The teasing is there no matter what, and sometimes it sucks. Sometimes you're not in the mood to hear the teasing, but you're going to hear it anyways. When you're in the construction industry, sometimes there aren't feelings there. People are here to do a job, and if you did a shitty job people are probably going to tell you that you did a shitty job. If you do a good job, people probably won't tell you you did a good job, but they won't say anything, which is good. So ya, I definitely have to be able to take teasing.

Q: Are there other women in camp?

SM: Ya there's a lot of girls that are on site with me, and they also stay in camp. With the camp life, there are other females there. One of the girls I met on ropes, she was really great with making me feel welcome. The first day I was there I kind of was just sticking to myself in the corner. Anna walks right up to me and she sticks out her hand, I'm Anna. She's smaller than me, and I'm like, if you're doing this, I got this, I'll be okay. But she was so welcoming and so nice. She was like, ya sometimes we go into town; if we go into town, I'll let you know. She's like, we'll have a wine night. She doesn't go to the gym but sometimes we'll try and get each other to go to the gym. So there are other females. However, a lot of us, by the time we get back to camp, we just want our own time. You're surrounded by people all day every day, constantly around somebody, constantly having people tell you what to do and how to do it – fix this, do that. Even when you have your own job and you're doing it, people are always checking in on you to make sure you're doing it properly and seeing where you're at. So by the time you get to camp, you kind of just want to lock yourself in the room and take that second, decompress, let yourself have your own you time, because you don't get it at all. Then you go to the gym and there's more guys at the gym or more people at the gym, so you're still surrounded by people. It's just constantly always being around people and it just tends to get draining, for me at least. I like to take my seconds and put my headphones on and just pretend I'm the only one there.

Q: What is OPCMIA?

SM: Operator Plasterers Cement Masons International Association. They deal with drywall, cement work, mudding, taping. Fireproofing is another section that they have as well. They do lots of different things. But OPCMIA is the Operator Plasters Cement Masons International Association.

Q: And your other local is 110?

SM: Ya, Heat and Frost Insulators, local 110.

Q: How do you deal with the physical challenges of the work?

SM: Some of the challenges with rope access, the first one being just the weight of the tools you need just alone to do the rope access. It's not even including the tools that you'll need for the job that has to be completed, it's just 25 to 30 pounds of a harness that you have to put on that has just your basic tools for you to get up the rope, down the rope, and in case of emergencies, as well as some work positioning tools. Your harness alone is like 25 pounds. Automatically as soon as you get into rope access, you need to be aware that you are going to be trying to go up these ropes with 25 pounds, on top of your steel-toed boots and your hardhat and things like that. So it does end up adding up. Physically wise, the tools that you use do tend to make your job easier. When you're doing rope access you have what's called a crawl. It's just like a tooth device that the rope gets attached into, and it only allows the rope to go the one way. You have a hand ascender, so it attaches onto the rope that locks so you can pull yourself up. The hand ascender also has a foot loop. So there's a rope that goes down from the hand ascender, and your foot catches into the loop. So now you have two points – you have your hand ascender to your foot as well as the rope going through your crawl. When you climb you step up off your foot, and the rope goes through the crawl and you pull it down and it moves you up and locks you to where you moved. Physically wise, you start to work muscles that you don't normally work. On top of it, you're carrying more weight that you don't normally carry. However, it keeps you where you need to be. It's not so bad, because you just kind of move inch by inch by inch, but it does start to add up. Climbing up ladders, the first month or is just your body getting used to carrying that extra 25 pounds. Then you have to have your tools

on top of it, so you kind of just have to get strong. You gotta use your body. You gotta realize, okay my arms aren't as strong or my back's not as strong when I'm trying to lower my cement bags, so maybe I'll put less cement in the bag or I'll try and break down the pieces into smaller portions so I have more control lowering it down. We also have a safety net attached underneath the beam, so if we are dropping pieces there's a net there to catch it. Afterwards we can go into the net off of our ropes, break down those pieces, and lower them out. The physical challenges are something that you just kind of have to face. They're going to be there regardless, so you need to get yourself prepared for it – going to the gym, trying to be active. There's a girl there that are 110 pounds and she's skin and bones. I didn't think she could climb ropes, but being lighter is sometimes better for climbing the ropes, because you don't have as much weight pulling you down. She'll go right up there. Anna's another lady smaller than me, and both of them are going up those ropes faster than some of the guys. They're just getting the job done. You build up muscles you didn't realize you had. You just kind of work slowly at it. Vitamin I, Ibuprofen, becomes your best thing in the world as well as muscle relaxant. But you kind of have to take care of yourself. When I was doing my course, the course alone is you're doing like eight hours a day of all climbing nonstop. You're practising different things, you have to perform different exercises in front of an assessor to let them know that you are able to perform this safely. So every other day I had a plan. On Wednesday I went into the hot tub and on Friday I did a hot tub, and I had my Ibuprofen and my muscle relaxant and I had ice bags. Every night for a week was self care night, because I needed my body to be good to go the next day because I had to get through this course. It's a \$2,000 course. The company pays for it, too, so you don't want to let anybody down. As long as you do your own preparation, know what you're getting yourself into, try going to the gym so it's not a shock on the system, you build up to it. Then once you start working off ropes you kind of just have to, like every day your job is to put this on and get your ass up there and go get this done. They try to make your job as easy as possible, like take only what you need to get yourself up and down and perform a rescue; make sure you don't have extra things that you don't need, those are just hazards. Then your muscle just kind of builds over time, and the more you do the easier it becomes. When I first started, I couldn't go to the gym for a month because I would go back to my room and be done. I would lay on the bed and message my boyfriend, and I'd probably be out by 8 p.m. every night. I was

just so pooched. But now it's about two months in and I'm like, okay gym tonight. My body just feels like it's normal. You kind of slowly grow into it and it just becomes a normal thing.

Q: What kind of protection and training were you given specifically around asbestos?

SM: They're very aware of mesothelioma and asbestos and whatnot. We have different programs that are in place to put our safety on our first line. We're wearing half masks if we're every having to deal with the fiberglass itself. With the half mask you'll use a P100 cartridge, which is a particulate cartridge. We also have vapour cartridges as well. But it depends. For the fibers you just need a particulate one. So you put those on and as you're just handling that, that's the minimum requirement you need. Usually if you're taking fiberglass or some type of insulation out of the box, you need to put it in a bag. You can't have it out in the open; they always want it contained in some way. So lots of containment, lots of having your full face on at all times. If they see you with insulation and you don't have your full face or your half mask on, they can walk you off site right away. They don't mess around with stuff like that. Lots of times they'll try and give you a warning. They obviously don't want anyone to not have their job or they don't want anyone to lose their job. But they do want you to realize your safety is a priority. When it comes into working with this material, asbestos has a whole different criteria on what you need to follow. That is based off of your job, but usually it involves a type of containment, making sure you're wearing your full face mask when dealing with asbestos. You have to have head to toe in your outfits. Usually the companies walk you down by their procedures, but they also in level 1 of insulating teach you the proper procedures of how to handle asbestos in insulating. It's not in our curriculum. It's not something that's just like, oh go work with this, we don't know anything about it. There's SDSs on things, there's FLHAs that you need to perform so that if something does happen they can go back and be like, well were you well trained enough? Did you know what you were doing, did you understand what you were working with? This is your job and your protocols and this is what you wrote on this day about what you were doing. There's lots of things put in place to help you realize this isn't stuff you want to mess around with, this is stuff that's going to cause long term harm. They are open about it. They show you MSDS sheets; they're supposed to have MSDS sheets and information regarding the stuff you're working with on site in an accessible area, usually in lunchrooms or



with your higher ups. So when it comes to working with materials like that, I feel like we've come far, because we realize there's an issue. Insulators 110 also has programs set up, so when I first joined the union they told me about going to Synergy to get my lungs checked, and they perform a few tests. They check for asthma and you do a blow test to see how strong your lungs are. They then follow it up with a doctor, and the doctor then takes a look at your results and lets you know where your lungs are standing. They take x-rays so they now have a starting base of what your respiratory functions are. As you stay in the trade, I think you do a checkup every two years. It's kind of like an optometrist. You go in every two years, they do another full assessment, and then they keep track of what you're doing and they get x-rays so they can see where you're going. If there's a change, they can catch onto it right away. I don't think they had programs like this before. So it's good to see that the union is involved and that they do want to make sure that you are going to be okay, and they are keeping up with it as well. That's how they're taking care of stuff like that.

Q: Are you familiar with the WOW Centre?

SM: That's what it is, I was trying to think of it. Workers of Wellness. With that program, they always let you know. That was one of the first things – if you're going to be a part of our hall, you need to set up an appointment with the WOW program. We want to get a starting result on where your lungs are. It's nothing that goes back as a negative against you. It doesn't interfere with your work or getting a job or anything like that. It's just to see your health and your safety, and where it's going and how it is. It's good, because I don't think there were programs like this and they sure as hell didn't care about how your lungs were 20 or 30 years ago. Now they have this program in place, which is something that went through the union. Thank goodness that the union cares about their people and wants to make sure that they're going to be okay later on in life. Then on top of it, the training through the level 1 to let you know, hey this is how we handle things, this is how you should be handling them on the site. If they aren't following these protocols, then this is where you need to refuse unsafe work. You're obligated to refuse unsafe work.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

SM: Delanee is the best. I want more sisters in the trades. I want to get more girls out there, because girls are doing such crazy work out there. It's not as scary as you think it is. It's kind of a weird thing to get into and it is scary, but it's like that good scary. If it scares you in your stomach you know you have to do it because you're only going to get better and it's only going to be a wicked opportunity and you're going to grow. It sucks, because guys are so essential to the trade. Males are crazy as well in the trades. Males do have the better opportunities, they do get all those higher positions. I feel like being a female, it was so sweet being a female in the trades. Opportunities are endless. The males that are in those higher positions do want to give females an opportunity to do it. There's just not as many females out there that are putting in that hard work. If you're a female and you're in the trade, put in that hard work because it is going to get noticed at some point. Don't sleep around, that's one thing I can get out there – just don't do it. Look at these guys as your brothers. And if you are, make sure you give it a lot of time before you do get into serious with the guy, because it might ruin your name later on even if that's not what you intended. You just don't know, because people are different from a work environment to outside. But ya, work really hard. Keep your head down, do your job. Don't give any sass, even if you want to give some sass. Give some sass if it's needed. Do you, booboo.

[ END ]