

Nomination for the PWABC Women's Public Works Ambassador Award



JEN FRETZ
Civic Operations Director



City of Kamloops – Civic Operations
955 Concordia Way
Kamloops BC V2C 6V3
August 2019

We are pleased to see your new award category for the Women's Public Works Ambassador Award and we are very proud to nominate Jen Fretz for this award. Jen is a woman of inspiration and a natural leader who has made a huge impact at the City of Kamloops. We are honoured to nominate her for this prestigious award, recognizing her accomplishments, significant strides towards building a great department within Civic Operations (Public Works) and to acknowledge her personally and professionally.

HER STORY

Jen Fretz obtained her Engineering degree from the University of British Columbia in 1999. After her involvement in the private sector, Jen was hired by the City of Kamloops in 2004 in the Public Works and Utilities Department as the Environmental Supervisor. While in this role, she promoted an integrated approach to sustainability bringing people with diverse interests together to work towards minimizing our footprint and protecting our environment.

Four years later, due to her significant accomplishments as a Supervisor, she was promoted to the role of Sustainability and Environmental Services Manager, which included Solid Waste and Sign Shop sections. During her tenure, Jen was instrumental in the development and implementation of many new initiatives such as the 'Can Plan' which brought curbside recycling to a whole new level in Kamloops.

In 2015, in the predominantly male field of Public Works, Jen embraced her new role of Public Works and Utilities Director, bringing to the leadership table a professional, confident, experienced, female perspective, while earning the respect of her team. As the Director, she provides leadership and is responsible for:

- Public Works Administration
- Parks and Civic Facilities
- Capital Projects
- Streets and Environmental Services
- Trades
- Utility Services

In 2018, the City of Kamloops underwent a considerable restructure whereby the Public Works and Utilities Department amalgamated with the Parks and Civic Facilities team to become the new Civic Operations Department. It was Jen's idea to give the newly formed department a new name so that all the employees came together as a new team, presenting as a united front. This amalgamation created the largest department within the City of Kamloops with 475 employees.

Careers in Civic Operations are highly sought after due to the leadership and commitment by our union and management employees. Jen ensures that she makes the time to not only meet with each new Civic Operations employee, which is well received, but she also makes the time to personally attend retirement functions, or reach out to the retirees to thank them for their service.

While providing guidance, mentoring and training to aspiring professionals in the field of public works, Jen actively promotes the City of Kamloops' community vision in that it is a sustainable, environmentally friendly community that supports active and healthy living, and is characterized as resilient, inclusive and vibrant. She promotes a collaborative approach between her management and union staff, valuing each team member's contribution while emulating our organization's values of Health, Innovation, Trust, Openness and Pride.

HOME – LIFE BALANCE

Jen encourages all of her staff to pursue home-life balance. She models this by spending her free time with her husband and two children living an active lifestyle. They live in the country because having space and being in nature fulfills that life balance for her. She spends time with her family enjoying the outdoors, encourages her daughter who participates in cheerleading, coaches her daughter's soccer team and supports her son's hockey passion. Jen annually hosts a gathering for her management team in her home as she sees value in families coming together, helping to build strong relationships amongst her leadership team.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Not only does Jen head a department of approximately 475 staff providing public services, but, as the Civic Operations Director, she sits on the Corporate Leadership Team and together they manage the operation of the entire City leading by example for a strong, inclusive, and healthy community.

Jen's leadership of the likeminded public works management team, which examines and resolves problems and collectively advances processes, results in a solid infrastructure system and the completion of a significant number of capital projects within our community. Whether it is at the corporate level discussing innovative strategies or as a boots-on-the-ground leader, Jen believes that it is important for all members of her team to have a voice and to be heard.

The following are some of Jen's accomplishments and examples of how she builds relationships:

- The City of Kamloops piloted a mentoring program to allow all City employees the opportunity to share knowledge, ideas and professional experience. Jen immediately and willingly offered to be a mentor to a female City employee. They each had specific roles and attended regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year. The pilot was a huge success and is now in its third year at the City of Kamloops. As a true example of Jen's caring nature, she continued to meet informally with her mentee even after the program finished.
- Jen reaches out to the youth in our City. She believes that helping young people see the person behind the career will help them pursue professions that they are passionate about. Jen did this by volunteering with the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) summer camp for girls. It is important to Jen to make a difference in the lives of youth so that they can discover their potential.

- Jen encourages and participates in the ongoing engagement between the Civic Operations Trades professionals and our School District and Thompson Rivers University's Trades Program promoting future careers in Public Works. Civic Operations plays a key role in our national 'Take Our Kids to Work' week where students in grade 9 participate and tour our many areas and treatment facilities.



Career Day at Valleyview Secondary School



STEM Summer Camp for Girls

- In 2017, the City of Kamloops hosted the Women in Public Works Workshop and Jen has been involved in this annual event ever since. She has enthusiastically presented at two of the workshops and openly shares her stories about being a woman in a profession made up of a majority of men. She speaks positively and humbly about her career path that has now taken her to a Director level and a member of the City of Kamloops Corporate Leadership Team. As an inclusive leader, Jen mentors women, provides them an opportunity to grow and empowers them to take leadership roles.



- Jen is a true ambassador for professional women in Public Works. As a certified Engineer, in her leadership role, Jen actively supported the work involved in the City of Kamloops demonstrating compliance with the certification criteria to become Organizational Quality Management Certified by the Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia (EGBC) in 2019. The collaboration between our Engineering and Capital Projects sections worked diligently to bring this to fruition.

- Jen is a huge supporter of utilizing National Public Works Week to educate and inform the public about the essential role that public works plays in the quality of their community life.
- Promoting the choice of public works as a career choice for the working force of the future and recognizing those who currently serve in these crucial public roles is important to her. The Public Works and Civic Operations Open House Community Celebration during National Public Works week hosted by her department every two years has emulated this.

This is a free event for everyone to participate in with a variety of activities and demonstrations. This past year was a huge success and was attended by residents of all ages. The children enjoyed the variety of activities and the adults picked up some great tips for the home and garden, environmental sustainability information, and a better understanding of how the City operates. Jen takes every opportunity to show case our services and had a video of the event produced. She has since proudly presented the video at every possible opportunity and has even made it available on the City's website for the public to view.



- Jen has vision, passion, and a proven ability to foster relationships. She exemplifies the four key values that she strives for in our department: Respect, Teamwork, Professionalism, and Communication. Her positive leadership skills are fully present whether she is in a meeting with City Council, acting as the Operations Section Chief when the Emergency Response Centre is activated, or meeting with an individual employee who provide services to the City. In addition, her great communication skills lead to solutions and success and her judgment is respected and trusted.
- Active within our local and the broader BC municipal community, Jen is an integral member and presents in a leadership role on behalf of the City of Kamloops for several collaborative community based initiatives such as:
 - Community to Community Forum
 - TNRD Membership Municipality Group
 - UBCM
 - Liaison and networking with other BC municipalities, visiting with her Management team, sharing innovations and initiatives.
 - Joint Cultural Heritage Working Group
 - Actively involved with the local Rotary

- Jen is a 'boots-on-the-ground' leader, actively involved in her own site and safety inspections and on her many tours of facilities, parks, trails, greenspaces, etc. while fostering relationships City-wide.



Jen, always hands on, visits the lower mainland with Civic Managers. As Kamloops is known as "Canada's Tournament Capital", Jen saw the value in having our very own 'Fanboni' – we look forward to its arrival this winter!



Touring City Council through the Civic Operations Yard.



Pumping gas with Managers, for fleet vehicles, as an employee appreciation initiative.



City Cemetery Columbarium, one of the many on-going site/facility visits.

SAFETY – TEAM BUILDING - TRAINING

- Team building is a critical component and an important corporate value Jen strives to attain in her 'every day' while promoting our Safety Works slogan "Everybody. Everyday".



"I am so proud of the Civic Operations Department. The entire team made safety a priority in 2018."
-Jen Fretz, Civic Operations Director

"This award is in conjunction with the Safety Division to recognize those that go above and beyond to make their workplace safer."
-David Trawin, Chief Administrative Officer

2018 CAO Exceptional Safety Performance Recognition Award Presented to the Civic Operations Department



- In June, 2019, Corporate leadership recognized the Civic Operations Department for its outstanding safety record for 2018. The award recognizes those that go above and beyond to make their workplace safer and specifically considers noteworthy contributions in the categories of leadership, statistics and innovation. Under the leadership of Jen Fretz, the Civic Operations Department demonstrated and maintained exceptional safety performance, all while reorganizing themselves during a corporate restructure. Jen ensured to point out that the award was a full team effort and that despite the department growing by 65%, the employees still managed to reduce total time lost due to injury by over 50%, with a 35% drop in medical aids, a 19% decrease in lost time incidents.



Jen and her Managers building strong, working relationships with other departments
– Fire Training Centre

- Team building is an integral component of Jen's every day focus. Jen clearly sets the standard for all her Managers to engage with their employees and coworkers.
- Jen initiated the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) training within Civic Operations, which focused on effective communications, knowing and using your strengths and dealing with conflict productively. The success of the SDI Tool quickly evolved into a Corporate-wide initiative.



CARING AND THOUGHTFUL

Jen is the voice, mentor and the representative for men and women at the Civic Operations Yard. She is caring, inclusive, encouraging and very humble. She always makes time in her busy schedule to support social initiatives, including buying cupcakes to support the SPCA, attending "social time" to celebrate birthdays of the month, attending chili cook-offs and numerous other staff events. Jen always leads by example and is also the first one to support and participate in important initiatives such as Pink T-Shirt Day to raise awareness against bullying.



One of Jen's strongest traits is her great sense of humour. She does not take herself too seriously and she is always ready to have some fun with her team.



“I feel fortunate to work with Jen Fretz, not only because of her great leadership ability, but because she empowers people and helps guide them to feeling confident so that they can reach their full potential. Jen is real and authentic and has a unique and honourable approach to blending intelligence with humility and humour as well as merging the tough and sometimes stressful work in the public service field with compassion and sensitivity. She is a genuine team player, role model and mentor.”

“Jen treats everyone with the respect they deserve and has earned her employees' respect through hard work, leading by example, and making time for anyone who wants to speak with her. She is both strong and fair and has worked diligently to bring together a very complex organization to create what is now a strong team environment.”

“I have worked in male-dominated fields my entire career, and it makes me so proud and inspired to walk into a meeting room full of men... and Jen. As well as being strong, decisive, and smart, she's warm and encouraging. I'm proud to work in the department she runs so brilliantly.”

“Jen is an empowered leader who has shown me that even in a position of power, she is able to make those around her feel powerful.”

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Thank you for accepting our nomination for the
Women's Public Works Ambassador Award




Canada's Tournament Capital

For more information - Kamloops.ca/CivicOperations

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