

Spring 2016

## people & profiles



### Aecon's 'Jill-of-all-Trades'

*The changing face of our heavy construction sector*

Katie started her career in heavy construction like many of us – by chance.

As a kid Katie wanted to be an architect, so after she graduated high school, she enrolled in the Architectural Technology program at SAIT in Calgary. “I wanted to give it a try first in a shorter program, which was also much less expensive than taking the university route,” Katie says as we sit having



breakfast at the Medicine Hat Lodge.

After a few courses she discovered this was not the path for her. Like many young people looking for inspiration, Katie continued in school, transferring first to Civil Technology at SAIT, and taking what she calls “a patchwork of courses.”

Over the summer months, Katie headed back home to

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Medicine Hat to look for a summer job. Her mom had been a flagperson at South Rock (now Aecon Transportation West) for several years, and suggested to Katie that she might like to try it out. “The hours were sometimes long – I think my longest-ever workday was about 16 hours – but there is always something to do. I was flagging on one really quiet stretch of highway that summer, so to pass the time waiting for traffic I would sing to myself,” Katie revealed.

She enjoyed her time at South Rock so much that she returned the following summer, and that year by the end of the season she was running a packer on the Stoney Trail project in Calgary. “I really enjoyed that. It felt kind of ‘bad ass’ to be running equipment. I felt good that they gave me more responsibility too.”

Over the course of a couple of construction seasons, Katie worked her way up to lead packer, and she and her team made up their own “sign language” so they could “talk” to each other from the seats of their machines. “When you’re on a crew, you really get close to people, it’s fun to come to work every day when you feel like you’re working with friends,” says Katie.

“I feel fortunate that Aecon has really invested in me. They’ve given me so many opportunities to do different jobs. I asked if I could do more paperwork, so they had me checking tonnages, then I learned how to check grades – that was really satisfying, to be able to drive by a completed project and think ‘I did that.’”

Today, Katie has graduated from SAIT’s Civil Engineering Technology program, and started as a “Technologist in Training” at Aecon this spring. Her job responsibilities include looking after ECO plans, traffic accommodations, time sheets, and haul sheets.

“There’s a variety of tasks every day, and depending on the project, they all have little provisions, like if there are noxious weeds on a worksite we need to make sure we are rinsing equipment before we move it. It’s all the small details that keep things interesting. There’s something new to learn on every project.”

“Even though I technically have a desk job at Aecon now – my office is really my truck. And that’s how I like it,” she says with a smile.

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*One of the projects  
in Medicine Hat  
completed by Aecon  
Transportation  
West (and Katie)  
this season*



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