

Suncor's Isabelle Varney, Paving a Path for Women in Energy

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NORTHAMPTON, May 25, 2023 - As a mechanical engineer and the General Manager of Maintenance and Reliability for Suncor's Base Plant Upgrading in Fort McMurray, Alta., Isabelle Varney knows firsthand what can be accomplished when women working in male-dominated roles and sectors, like energy, band together to share their successes.

"Seeing other women succeed in this industry has been important for me as a woman and as a leader," says Isabelle. "There is something very powerful about being able to see women thrive in this field and making connections with other women in the energy sector."

Working to celebrate the achievements and potential of women in the sector, Isabelle is active in Suncor's employee inclusion network, Women Engage (WE). Through her work with WE, Isabelle was recently recognized by Young Women in Energy (YWE)-an organization with over 4,500 members-with an award naming her one of 10 inspirational young women leading Alberta's evolving energy landscape.

"Receiving this award means a lot to me. First as a woman who has spent the last 12 years in the industry and second because it celebrates something I'm very passionate about; inclusion and diversity."

YWE was formed in 2013 to bring women in the energy sector together to share their success stories, create more visibility and inclusion and celebrate the achievements of women, who make up 31 per cent of the workforce in Canada's energy sector.

For Isabelle, who joined Suncor after working in the mining sector, having women's voices included in the workplace is simply good business sense.

"We've only consulted a portion of the population when it comes to the people who can add value in this space. So, for me, it becomes even more important to pave a path and make sure women can be successful here. We need diverse thoughts, diverse people, diverse ideas at the table. We are not at our full potential because there's a large portion of the population we're not tapping into. This is true of the trades and of our technical teams-women need to see themselves in this field, so they want to join our teams and flourish."

As a young engineer, Isabelle benefited from mentorships with men and women, who helped her grow in her career, provided her with different perspectives and showed her that she could succeed in the energy sector.

"I've had really great mentors throughout my career who trusted me and believed in my abilities," explains Isabelle. "I see that I have an obligation to pay it forward, and to make the industry an even better place for women. We need to share stories of women who have had successful careers in the energy sector, while also working to create an environment where women feel included."

Isabelle accepted her award in March during YWE's annual awards celebration and is featured in a special edition of YWE magazine.

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Contact Info:
Spokesperson: Suncor Energy
Website: <https://www.3blmedia.com/profiles/suncor-energy>
Email: info@3blmedia.com

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