

Local women's committees benefit all members

Local 128 (Sarnia, Ontario) Boilermakers Christine Hahn and Meghan Meehan found their way to the Boilermaker trade via different paths. Hahn was an experienced welder looking for better money and job benefits; Meehan comes from a family of Boilermakers and decided to make it her career after two years of university study.

But their thinking is similar when it comes to recruiting and retaining more women into the union. Mentorship and a support system, they say, are critical. That's why they're both part of the leadership team for L-128's new Women's Committee.

"We don't want to be the kind of people who say 'well, we figured it out, so you need to figure it out on your own, too.'" Meehan says.

Hahn and Meehan attended the 2022 Tradeswomen Build Nations conference in Las Vegas and shared some insight on their committee with their Boilermaker sisters during a Boilermakers caucus and in an interview with the Reporter.

L-128's Women's Committee began in March 2022. It took about two years to get things up and running.

"Ninety percent of the work was done by Kim Quinn," Hahn says, noting that Quinn's role on the lodge's executive board as recording secretary was helpful in navigating and shepherding their ideas toward approval. Quinn serves as the committee's president.

"It's important to gain support from the local and lodge leadership from the get-go," Hahn advises.

The goals of L-128's Women's Committee focus on recruitment and retention and include:

- Implement a mentorship program
- Gain more representation on jobs and in the local
- Keep records of women coming in, women leaving the union and why they're leaving
- Advocate for and create benefits that attract and retain women



Meg Meehan, left, and Christine Hahn describe L-128's new women's committee during the Boilermakers caucus.

- Advocate for diversity and inclusion—not just gender based, but also regarding people of color and First Nation people

"This isn't something that will only benefit female members—this helps the whole membership, and it's important to enlighten everyone about that," Meehan says, noting that with the demand for skilled workers rising, recruitment and retention of women is critical to properly staff jobs.

During the Boilermakers caucus at TWBN, sisters from L-146 (Calgary, Alberta) and L-549 (Pittsburg, California), whose lodges have also started women's caucuses or committees, joined Hahn and Meehan to share best practices. All encouraged other women to seek support for their own local-level committees or caucuses and to promote the importance of sisters supporting one another on the job and helping other women into leadership roles.

"Women coming into the Boilermakers union need support on the job in order to keep the job," Hahn says. "They to be partnered with someone—an ally—from the beginning. That can be a Boilermaker brother or a woman, but female mentors can be huge. I will bend over backward to make a sister feel welcome." 🔥