

# Female welder says it was tough breaking into the 'boys' club'

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less than them, because I was a woman."

But Chard was able to endure the challenges of swimming upstream in the male-dominated field, and has worked on oil and gas pipelines all over Ontario, including Barrie, Toronto, Trenton, Ottawa, Stitsville and North Bay.

When she's not on a pipeline project, she works in industrial welding, turning her talents to steam and gas pipelines running into buildings and factories.

Welding pipelines sees her joining pipelines ranging from 12 to 42 inches in diameter, all welded together by arc-welding (commonly referred to as 'stick welding') as the welder welds the outside join and an

automatic welder welds the inside seam.

"All pipeline welds are inspected and X-rayed to check for any problems," said Chard. "And they must be perfect—the company doesn't want to have to go back out and fix a leak because of an improper weld. Time is money in that business, and we have to be perfect, and fast."

Welding in the trade since 2003, she worked her first pipeline in 2006, in Stitsville.

"It was hard at first," said Chard. "But after I proved myself, the job became easier. It was a bit of a 'boys' club,' and the other workers wouldn't speak up for me."

But time has worked in her favour, and now she's recognized for her experience,

backing it up with performance.

Earlier this summer, her perseverance was recognized at Equality Day: A Celebration of Women, hosted by Women's Legal Education Fund (LEAF), a fund founded in April of 1985 to advance women's equality through law. Chard, along with seven other women in non-traditional trades, was honoured at the event, as well as asked to share her story.

The event, held at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, gave Chard an opportunity to talk about how she has worked her way through the ranks in her trade.

In addition to the recognition from LEAF, Chard has found a passion for speaking to students, mostly girls, at Skills Canada pro-

grams, to encourage them to look into the various apprenticeship programs, especially ones that are non-traditional trades.

Chard said there's lots of trades that women can work in, beside their male counterparts—they just have to look into them and be prepared to work hard to be successful.

While she enjoys working the pipelines and other industrial jobs, Chard has set her sights on going the next level.

"I'm hoping to become a pipeline inspector at some point down the road," said Chard. "I already have my Level 1 (accreditation) but will need to complete Level 2 and 3 with the Canadian Welding Bureau (CWB) before I can actually do that job."



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