



PORTRAITS OF WOMEN IN THE MARINE INDUSTRY

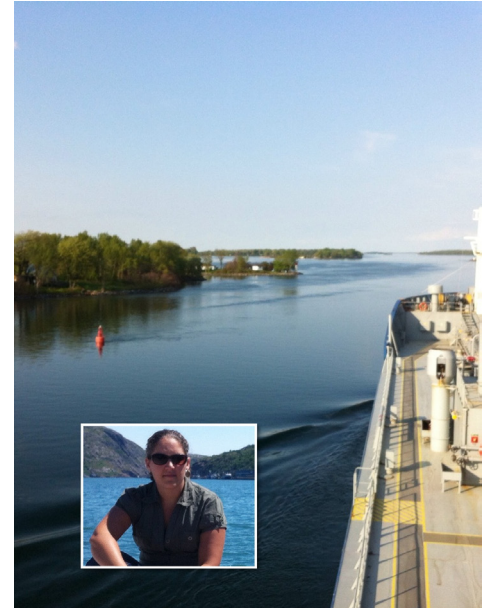
2013-2014
PORTRAIT N° 2

Marie-Claude Laurendeau

Let's get to know these women who've had the courage and desire to take a different path by choosing a non-traditional marine career... women who dove headfirst into a world traditionally reserved for men and who, today, are our industry's pride and joy.

Make way for our female ambassadors!

"My ultimate career goal was to become a captain before turning 30 and...I did it!"



► As one of Canada's five women marine pilots, Marie-Claude Laurendeau is a pioneer and source of inspiration for future women marine-sector workers. Even more impressive, she is also the country's second youngest women pilot.

Despite her love of the sea, Marie-Claude was not born into a seafaring family and did not know any navigators when she made this career choice. Her love of sailing dates from years ago...

After finishing her diploma of college studies (DEC) at *Cégep de Drummondville*, Marie-Claude was not sure which university program to choose. She happened upon an *Institut maritime du Québec* (IMQ) brochure, which immediately caught her interest. "One day, my dad had to drive up to Rimouski on business. I asked to come along to visit the school and fell in love with it on the spot!", she told us.

The following year, she took the plunge, guided by her love of learning and growing interest in the field... proof positive that the marine industry is open to anyone ready and willing to make an effort to succeed.

Graduating in the IMQ's "Navigation" class of 2001-2002, Marie-Claude worked hard to make her mark in a largely male-dominated industry. "Actually, the problems I ran into early in my career were not so much

related to being a woman as to my youth and lack of experience. You don't learn technique from books, you learn it from sailing", Marie-Claude points out.

Her first jobs led her to travel for many months in the Caribbean, in Africa and in Norway for various international companies. Then, Marie-Claude embarked on a wonderful adventure with Canada Steamship Lines (CSL) and sailed for them for close to 10 years.

It is with CSL that she obtained her captain's papers before age 30, a rare feat among mariners. Once she had managed this, Marie-Claude could aspire to specialize as a pilot.

Since 2011, she has been working at this unique occupation for the Great Lakes Pilotage Authority. As a specialized navigator, she takes charge of vessels in the Saint-Lambert (Montréal) - Cornwall (Ontario) sector of the St. Lawrence River.

She feels that her job offers significant, singular advantages. Freedom, travel, discovering the world, lack of routine and navigation's non-traditional aspect are all concrete examples. "I'm really lucky", says Marie-Claude, "I work 125 days a year, I have a lot of free time and I have a more-than-decent salary". Very few jobs offer all this!



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Given the unique nature of marine careers, officers must be extremely versatile Marie-Claude confirms. “When you navigate, you do a bit of everything. Your duties can involve computers, loading operations, personnel management and/or manual labour. You may even have to play the role of banker or psychologist.”

While marine careers are definitely demanding, they are extremely enriching and gratifying! Marie-Claude recounts: “I remember my first day as a captain. I had this amazing feeling, an adrenaline rush! I was in Detroit with my crew. The lives of 25 sailors were in my hands, an enormous responsibility...but it felt amazing”.

Marie-Claude’s future, no doubt, holds a flourishing career full of surprises and unforgettable moments that only seafaring can offer!

OPINIONS

Women marine workers and you

Within its mandate, the Human Resources Sectorial Committee of the Maritime Industry (CSMOIM) accords particular importance to planning for the new generation of workers. The current labour situation in Québec’s marine sector shows that women are under-represented in non-traditional job categories, more specifically navigating. We wanted to get Marie-Claude Laurendeau’s views on this major challenge to debunk any myths surrounding the phenomenon...

► **CSMOIM: In your opinion, what are the main choices and challenges associated with planning for the new generation of women workers?**

MCL: In my opinion, the most important factor preventing women from navigating is family. It’s hard for me to image that combining the two is possible... but some women manage to do it.

For shipping companies, keeping women staff is a major challenge. I have the impression that employers are more reluctant to promote women to high positions given the significant investments that this requires and the possibility that women will put their career aside to have a family.

► **CSMOIM: Do you believe there are biases against women navigators? If so, what are they and how can they be eliminated?**

MCL: Yes, unfortunately. Prejudice exists but we have to work to get rid of it. First off, the idea that women are not as strong physically is completely unfounded. What’s important is being able to use your head. It’s too bad that some women on ships continue to feed into this type of prejudice.

The way to overcome it is to develop special training on conduct to adopt aboard ship to be accepted and respected by a primarily male crew. Such training could be offered in a course at the IMQ or in companies themselves after a woman is hired. The goal would be to provide tools to react appropriately to certain male behaviour, particularly at the international level.

► **CSMOIM: What advice would you give to a woman who is thinking about a career in the marine industry?**

MCL: I would definitely encourage her... marine-sector careers are very rewarding and come with excellent salary conditions. In my opinion, the key to success is to be able to share a man’s world while remaining professional and keeping a certain distance.

I would also tell her that she’d better be ready to work hard. It’s important to look at both sides: in this career, we give a lot, but we also get a lot in return.

By Dominique Labbé
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