

# corporate family values

## WORKING AND PLAYING TOGETHER ON THE CANAD INNS TEAM

**Hiring the best person for every job has been standard practice at Canad Inns for the past four decades. With 11 Canad Inns Destination Centres, 35 restaurants and a host of amenities and attractions within its properties, the company prides itself on its ability to attract and retain top talent.**

That's one reason it's so gratifying to Canad Inns President Lea Ledohowski to see more women entering the traditionally male-oriented industry, and taking on management roles at every level across the organization.

"We have a high representation of female managers throughout our food and beverage and hotel establishments, so that's something that's really unique and exciting to see," she says.

"It just happened organically and naturally. We went out to find, and continue to go out to find, the best people and there just happened to be a number of really talented women who earned their positions on merit alone. For me, that's probably the most rewarding part."

Women make up a full third of the 12-member senior management team, and all four carry the title of Vice-President — VP of Sales & General Manager Marion McKenzie, VP of Corporate Identity and Community Relations Cindy Carswell, VP of Human Resources & Privacy Officer Terryl Waller and VP of Financial Information Services Karen Johnson.

Ledohowski says each brings unique strengths to the table, along with shared strengths, including healthy ambition and sense of self.

"I think that's something that defines anyone who ends up being successful and it is particularly meaningful in a female because despite all the opportunities that are there, we still have to fight for a seat at the table every once in a while, and sometimes you have to speak up to be heard," she says. "So having self-confidence and determination is something that each of those women share, absolutely, and

a real sense of poise and maturity and professionalism is something that I think they each bring to their roles."

As the eldest child of founder Leo Ledohowski, Lea likes to joke that she's been part of the business her whole life. Through the years, she has held many positions, from bookkeeping, to restaurant server, Manager, and now President. Along the way she's been part of the evolution of a family business into a thriving company over 3,500 members strong.

"Our business is very fast paced; there is a new opportunity and a new challenge almost daily, and the best part of my job is getting to attack those opportunities with a diverse group of competent, committed, wonderful people," she says.

Waller brought the benefit of over 20 years of experience in the HR field when she joined Canad Inns in 2016. She says it felt like the right fit from Day 1.

"Each day brings new challenges, but as a team we get through them all. That's what makes working with this company so much fun! I'm proud to sit on the executive team of a company that strives to be Bigger... Better... Today and Tomorrow."

Carswell has been with Canad Inns for 16 years, and she had 16 years of prior experience in diverse non-profit and public-sector roles. Responsible for the strategic positioning of the company through brand development, sponsorships, the Canad Inns Foundation and community relations, she takes pride in being part of a company that has a strong belief in corporate responsibility and giving back to the community.

"Canad Inns is proud to be a company that is Manitoba Owned, Manitoba Grown,

Manitoba Proud," Carswell says. "The Ledohowski family operates Canad Inns as a family business and treats all employees as members of the family."

That sentiment is echoed by McKenzie, who joined Canad Inns in 2014 as General Manager of one of the largest Destination Centres. By February 2016, she was promoted to Vice President of Sales and began performing a dual role.

"Canad Inns truly believes in family, and with these values at its core it has enabled me to build a successful career and raise an active family," McKenzie says.

"Coming from an Indigenous background has allowed me to bring greater understanding to the needs of the diverse groups that I work with on a daily basis, both within my own operational teams, and customers alike."

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Ledohowski holds a B.A. Honours in Psychology, has a Master's in Architecture, is a LEED Accredited Professional, and holds a Master of Science in Real Estate Development and Finance from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and gets to apply all her skills and interests at Canad Inns.

Previously, she had a successful career in another male-dominated industry, real-estate development, and she knows from experience that it can be lonely for women at the top.

"For most of my early career I was typically the only woman sitting at any



From left: Karen Johnson, VP of Financial Information Services; Lea Ledohowski, President; Terryl Waller, VP of Human Resources & Privacy Officer; Cindy Carswell, VP of Corporate Identity and Community Relations; Marion McKenzie, VP of Sales & General Manager.

Photo courtesy of Canad Inns

boardroom table," she says, adding that while she doesn't like to perpetuate gender stereotypes, it's hard to deny that women bring a "certain calming influence," to the boardroom.

"I think having a high number of executives who happen to be female has resulted in a more collaborative, more dynamic approach to problem-solving and I think it really has enhanced the way we make decisions in our organization as a whole."

Named one of Manitoba's Top Employers, and one of Canada's Best Managed Companies (an honour bestowed on the company for 20 consecutive years), Canad Inns works hard to maintain a workplace culture where staff and management know they're appreciated and valued. It provides opportunities for fast advancement and fosters an environment that inspires loyalty and commitment in its team, and as a private company, it has the flexibility to accommodate diverse needs and career goals.

"Holding a senior role in a privately owned corporation is a unique opportunity, especially being able to witness the vision and passion of the owner first-hand," says Johnson, who oversees the corporate accounting, information technology, payroll and commercial property accounting departments/functions.

"There is truly never a dull moment; it's been a busy and exciting career where our company has experienced tremendous growth. The hospitality industry is fun and exciting and constantly evolving."

Along with attending concerts and sporting events and taking part in team-building activities, staff and management share in a variety of special events — from hosting the family-friendly Canada Day event at Assiniboine Park for the past 17 years to treating Manitobans to the Canad Inns Winter Wonderland display each December.

With its wide range of prominent properties — three commercial properties including the recently acquired

Somerset Building on Portage Avenue, the Metropolitan Entertainment Centre, Destination Centres attached to Club Regent Casino in Winnipeg and the Keystone Centre in Brandon, as well as Tavern United at Bell MTS Place and two Garbonzo's Pizza Pub locations — Canad Inns has outgrown its early identity as a traditional family business, but its value system remains intact.

"Internally we refer to ourselves as the Canad Inns family, and it sounds a little bit like a cliché but it absolutely is true," Ledohowski says.

"We have a very high proportion of our staff and our management team who have been with us for many, many years and in a lot of cases, many decades, and I think that kind of loyalty points to the fact that there is a really enjoyable working environment for folks," she adds.

"We work together, we play together and we genuinely care about each other." ■

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