



# Women in Steel:

## Progress & Perspectives



### Kate Kuuskman

General Manager – Direct Strip Production Complex and Cold Mill  
Algoma Steel Inc.

#### Where did your education and career start?

I began my post-secondary education enrolled in life sciences at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., Canada. Just a few months into my first year, I realized that my passion was more aligned with engineering, and transferred to engineering physics with the mechanical engineering option, which is a blend of engineering, physics and math. Upon graduation in 2005, I remained uncertain about a career path, and enrolled at Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., USA, in mechanical engineering with a robotics option. I found that this really helped to round out my theoretical and practical knowledge and skillset, and gave me additional perspective on what I may be interested in as a career. While I was completing the program in 2006, an interesting opportunity as a process

analyst arose at Algoma Steel, and I have been a proud member of the Algoma team ever since.

#### Why did you choose the steel industry?

I was born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie, where Algoma Steel is located. Although I am now a third-generation steelworker, growing up I didn't really understand what happened "behind the gates," and had no interest in a career at Algoma, not really understanding the breadth of what a career in industry or in steel could be. As I learned more about the various processes in a steel mill and the careers that support them, I saw how interesting and varied the opportunities are.

#### Tell us how you have advanced in your career.

I started my career as a process analyst in the hot rolling mill of the Direct Strip Production Complex (DSPC), focused on process improvements and process centerlining. I then progressed to become the DSPC operations superintendent, and then the DSPC technical superintendent. Over time, that role was expanded to include cold mill technical as well, giving me broader experience within the plant. In 2020, I was promoted to the role of general manager of the DSPC and cold mill division, responsible over the operations and maintenance of those mills. Throughout my career, I have also felt strongly supported to perform and challenge myself, and given opportunities to grow.

#### What are you most proud of in your career?

I am the first female general manager in operations at Algoma and I am accountable for our flagship facility. I am proud of this accomplishment and I am now able to engage with and inspire girls and young women in elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools about the rewarding careers steel can offer.

### Has the steel industry become more inclusive?

Absolutely! When I was interviewed to join Algoma, I was warned that it was a male-dominated workplace, and asked whether I thought I would be comfortable in that. Although that's a question that would be absolutely unthinkable today, it didn't phase me; having graduated from a program that was male-dominated, I was used to being the only female in the room.

---

**“I feel good knowing what I do makes people's lives around me better.”**

---

Since day one, I never felt that I was treated differently because of my gender, and felt like I had an equal voice at the table as my male colleagues, but for quite a while I was still often the only woman in the room. That has now evolved across all levels of the organization to not only have more female representation, but to truly value and respect the different perspectives that diversity brings.

### What has been the best thing about being a woman in this industry?

Steel is a critical material. Two-thirds of manufactured goods are steel-containing and steel makes lives better. I feel good knowing what I do makes people's lives around me better.

### Do you have any professional development book recommendations that you'd like to share?

I found the book *Good to Great* by Jim C. Collins to be very thought-provoking. ♦

**IF A PICTURE  
IS WORTH A  
THOUSAND WORDS,  
THEN A VIDEO IS  
WORTH A MILLION**

**FIND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS, RECAPS,  
INTERVIEWS AND MORE**

Informative, enjoyable and ready for you to watch.

Check out our channel at

 [YouTube.com/AIST186](https://www.youtube.com/AIST186)

