



**Employer of the Year**  
VICA Awards Gala Nomination  
Houle Electric Limited

**2022**

# 2022 Employer of the Year VICA Awards Gala Nomination

## Company Overview

Our story began in 1944 when Lionel Houle and his father realized their dream of opening an electrical store. This store, which they named Houle Electric, provided electrical products and services to the residents of Port Alberni, British Columbia. The next few decades saw considerable growth with the opening of several regional offices in BC. Since then, this two-person father and son team has grown to a company of about 1,000 employees and expanded operations throughout British Columbia. Houle has continued to be 100% employee owned, with staff having a vested interest in the quality of work and client satisfaction.

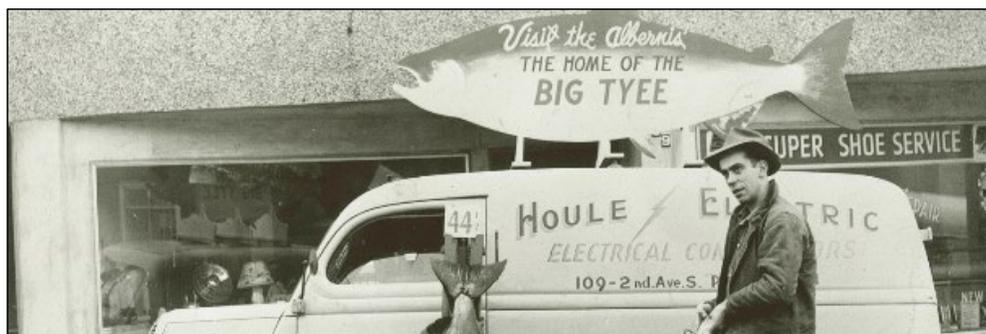


Figure: Our founder, Lionel Houle

Houle has come a long way from being just an electrical company. Today, we are proud to serve our industrial, commercial, institutional, and residential customers across British Columbia and Canada with diversified offerings through 10 local offices in Greater Vancouver, Victoria and South Island, Nanaimo and North Island, Prince George and BC North, Kamloops and Nicola Valley, Kelowna and Okanagan Valley, Kitimat, Campbell River, and Courtenay-Comox. All Houle customers are provided with consistent service from any of our offices regardless of the location.

Houle is British Columbia's most trusted name in integrated electrical systems. We are renowned for our project management and design skills across all of our divisions which include Electrical Contracting, Security and Life Safety, Networks and Infrastructure, Building Controls Automation, Industrial Construction, Lighting, Monitoring, Audio Visual, Power Quality and Service. Houle's offerings and expertise include design-build/design-assist, cost budgets, project management, construction management, installation and retrofitting, as well as 24-hour emergency and on-call service to businesses and homeowners.

For the past eight years, Houle has been named one of Canada's Best Managed Companies owing to our commitment to embracing innovation, seizing opportunities, and inspiring talent.

Our quality of work, and superior safety records, have consecutively received awards from VRCA (Vancouver Regional Construction Association) who recognize the best companies and projects in the construction industry. Some of these awards include - Safety Award, Awards of Excellence & Innovation, and Productivity Award.

Additionally, for the previous two years, Houle has been certified as a Great Place to Work by the Great Place to Work Institute. This certification is based on direct feedback from our employees who complete an anonymous survey that measures parameters such as pride, respect for people, fairness in the workplace, credibility of management and camaraderie between people. In addition to the survey, the Great Place to Work Institute also evaluates Houle's people management practices before awarding this designation.

Furthermore, Houle has been recognized as a BC Top Employer for the past two years for our progressive and forward-thinking programs.

## Core Purpose

Create opportunity. Enrich lives.  
Bring communities to life.

## Core Values



Safety,  
Health & Wellbeing



Quality



Ethics & Integrity



Diversity, Inclusion  
& Belonging

**Our People** – Our people remain at the core of our service excellence. Our success is a direct reflection of the caliber of our employees. From executive to tradesperson, office staff to manager, many of our employees are long-term personnel of Houle. Our longest standing employee has been with Houle for 40 years!

## Fair and Competitive Remuneration

We attach great value to the compensation of our employees. Transparency and fairness are two important pillars that guide the development of our compensation policy. First and foremost, we offer a competitive salary that we benchmark regularly against industry leaders. Further, it is important to us that we provide equal pay for equal work. Our leaders have taken various measures to build a culture of inclusion and diversity, and have demonstrated, through actions, that we are an equal opportunity employer. Moreover, Houle provides diversity and inclusion training for our managers, to ensure we are promoting an inclusive workplace and culture while eliminating bias in the hiring process.

As well, we have created and implemented metrics to monitor the gender pay gap, throughout different roles and levels. We also participate in special programs that generate opportunities for Women in Trades. In addition to this, we participate in Diversity Job Fairs, organized to reach and hire minority groups, including Indigenous people, so we can increase their presence in our workforce at all levels.

In addition to salary, we have a performance incentive plan designed to facilitate and motivate employees to deliver high performance. All non-union employees and some select union staff, are eligible to participate in the incentive plan and both individual, and company performance, is reviewed to determine bonus payout amounts.

## Recruitment, Hiring Methods, and Retention Strategies

We aim to hire, nurture, and sustain a capable, vibrant, and engaged workforce who align with our core purpose and values. Our recruitment team’s goal is to hire best-in-class candidates who will be taking on future leadership roles at Houle. As an organization, we seek to be Employer of Choice for:

- Electricians
- Technical Specialists
- People Leaders
- College Graduates

## Branding and Recruitment

Our HR team, with support from our Marketing team, aims to portray a welcoming atmosphere to interested candidates. Whether it is on LinkedIn, our career website on [houle.ca](http://houle.ca), or other social media platforms, we display information about our organization and provide straightforward instructions on how to apply.

On LinkedIn, we include direct contact information to reach our HR team, so there is a welcoming face as the candidate’s first introduction to Houle. Instead of using stock photos in our branding, we use photos of actual employees at work.

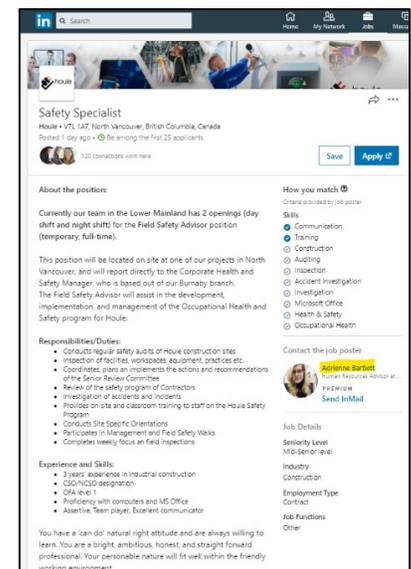


Figure: Our LinkedIn page



Thompson River University job fair

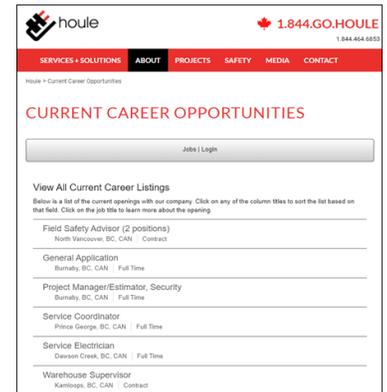
We actively attend Job Fairs for recruitment and career awareness purposes. This gives us a great opportunity to tell up-and-coming graduates about Houle!

We have partnered with the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) to recruit entry-level technicians and designers for our technologies division (specifically security and HVAC). We do a presentation to each graduating class about the benefits of working with Houle, and provide job offers to top graduates.

We actively engage our internal staff with updates on new career opportunities. Instead of relying on managers to put forward employee

names for promotion, we communicate all career advancement opportunities through email. Additionally, we build strong connections between the HR team and the workforce so employees feel comfortable discussing any opportunities. Our HR team stays mindful of employees looking for change/promotion, keeping a dialogue between management and leadership on how we can support.

We list all job opportunities on our external website: <https://www.houle.ca/current-career-opportunities/>. We use an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) system for both internal and external applications, allowing all applications to be housed in one location. This helps with fairness and efficiency in the recruitment process.



Houle.ca Career Listings

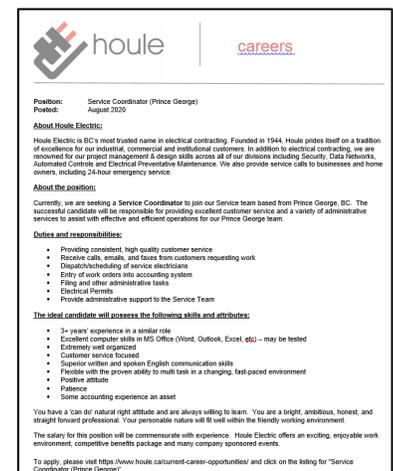
## Hiring Process

Once we identify a hiring need, we follow a specific hiring process to ensure we find the **right person for the job**. With the help of HR, managers create a job description to determine the required skillsets. In conjunction with this, the HR representative will discuss with the manager what qualities to look for in a candidate to ensure there is a proper personnel fit with their team and the company culture.

To assist HR, leadership, and management in making effective hiring decisions, we have implemented a form to assist with the hiring process. This form provides clarification on the nature of the hire and ensures executives provide the necessary approvals. This form also ensures all stakeholders are aligned with the recruitment goals.

Once the Hiring Request form is completed and approved, HR creates a job description, posts, and collects applications. To facilitate and streamline the hiring process, we prefer to keep the job description simple and clear.

At this point in the recruitment process, we reach out to any internal candidates who are interested in the opportunity, and schedule a meeting to share more about what the job entails. In addition, we reach out to current, or previous, co-op students that have embodied Houle's values, to become permanent employees of the company.



Sample Job description

The ATS we use has the ability to ask basic questions of candidates and assist in the shortlisting process (e.g. Are you legally able to work in Canada?, What is your working knowledge on MS Office?, etc.) From here, we identify qualified candidates and move to the next step: getting to know them!

## Screening Interview

We perform a screening interview to help determine whether selected candidates may be a good fit. Ideally, phone screening introduces the candidate to us, while introducing us to them; we know they meet the basic requirements, but are they a good fit for our company? Our HR team is well versed in asking the right questions to gauge this quickly and gives candidates opportunities to respond to and ask questions

## In-person Interviews

As mentioned, we **focus on finding the *right* person for the job**. To do this, we have carefully crafted behavioural interview questions to assess a candidate's attitude and competencies. The goal is to find alignment between who the candidate is and who we are (as a whole).

Using behavioural interview questions enables the hiring manager and HR team to assess the likelihood that a candidate will reflect and adapt the core beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that align with Houle's core values. Example – as collaboration is one of our key cultural elements, people who have a genuine, authentic belief in the value of collaborative work will have a stronger cultural fit for Houle than those who are more comfortable as individual contributors.

To ensure inclusiveness and mitigate unconscious bias as best we can, all interviews include an HR team member, the hiring manager, and another stakeholder (usually another manager or senior team member). Having multiple people assess the hiring decision also helps to ensure cultural fit and ensure we are making the right decision for the organization.

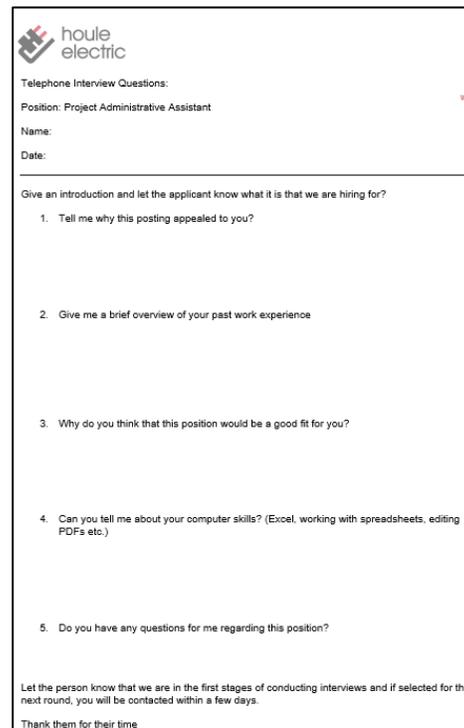
As an added assurance in our hiring process, we usually proceed to a second round meeting between the potential candidate and senior management and executives. Incorporating this step ensures management is in agreement with the new hire and hold everyone accountable to ensuring the candidate is a good fit. Simultaneously, it reveals more information to the candidate about who we are as an organization.

## Reference Checks

After interviews, and before a job offer, we conduct 2-3 reference checks. This enables us to explore the cultural fit of the candidate and determine the candidate's behavior at previous work placements. We asks open-ended questions that focus on assessing candidate's work style and behaviour, communication style, motivation, performance, attitude at work, and collaboration. This is an extra step in our efforts to hire for cultural fit.

## Recruitment Costs

We are fortunate that approximately 30% of our new employees come from referrals. Not only does this support keep our recruitment costs low, having current staff promote Houle as an employer of choice is



The image shows a sample telephone interview questions form for Houle Electric. The form is titled 'houle electric' and 'Telephone Interview Questions:'. It includes fields for 'Position: Project Administrative Assistant', 'Name:', and 'Date:'. Below these fields, there is a section titled 'Give an introduction and let the applicant know what it is that we are hiring for?' followed by five numbered questions: 1. Tell me why this posting appealed to you? 2. Give me a brief overview of your past work experience 3. Why do you think that this position would be a good fit for you? 4. Can you tell me about your computer skills? (Excel, working with spreadsheets, editing PDFs etc.) 5. Do you have any questions for me regarding this position? At the bottom of the form, there is a note: 'Let the person know that we are in the first stages of conducting interviews and if selected for the next round, you will be contacted within a few days. Thank them for their time.'

*Sample interview questions*

welcomed! Usually referrals are already familiar with our culture, as they know someone on the inside, thus the hiring is more focused on examining skills and abilities.

We have built a strong reputation in the industry and we receive a large number of applications as “Direct Applications” through our ATS. We do occasionally require the assistance of recruitment agencies, however, we aim to keep this at a minimum as we prefer to work with candidates directly. Occasionally we have roles to fill where we will work with a small select group of agencies that know and understand our culture and have worked with us for years.

## Hiring and Onboarding Apprentice and Red Seal Electricians

Houle is an IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) recognized employer and all of our field staff are members of the IBEW union and are hired through the union. Once the union clears a field staff for dispatch to Houle, we initiate their onboarding process just like we do for our office staff. Each year we hire up to 300 electrical apprentices as they train to become a Red Seal Journeyman. Through our partnership with the union, our apprentices are provided with various on-site learning opportunities throughout BC. Often beginning as pre-apprentices in our Prefabrication Shop, they are provided with a safe, controlled environment to begin their journey to becoming a skilled trades person.

## Continuous Connection

Rather than wait until the employee’s first day to connect, we continuously engage the employee once they have signed their letter of employment. At this point, we would also complete other appropriate paperwork such as Criminal Record Checks, Credit Checks, Security Clearances, all dependent on the nature of the role. We provide the start-up location, time, and brief instructions on their first day at Houle. We also answer any questions they have, most commonly, what is the dress code!

## Retention Strategies

Right after offering the job to the candidate, we ensure to continuously engage with them to provide the best onboarding experience.

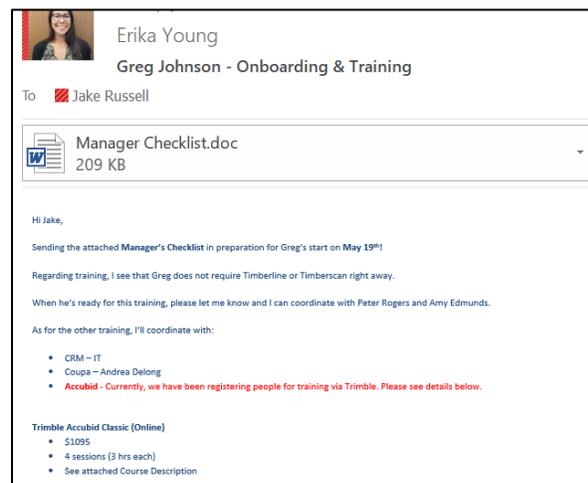
## Manager’s Checklist and Training Plan

From the beginning, hiring managers are very engaged in the new hire orientation process. It is the hiring manager’s responsibility to announce to their team that they have a new team member joining.

To assist the hiring manager, we provide them with an in-depth Manager’s Orientation that touches on almost every aspect of their management responsibilities, including Hiring and Orientation. Once we have finalized the new hire, we provide a Manager Checklist to go over all of the crucial elements for a successful start-up. We discuss with the manager what types of training they will need to provide to their new employee to get them up and running quickly.

## Orientation

On an employee’s first day, our HR team meets with the new hire, at their arrival, to provide them with all of the necessary information they will need on their first day. We cover all high-level information related to the organization. The new hire then meets their team for day-to-day work. This orientation includes:



*Onboarding checklist*

- Welcome Video: Who we Are; What we Do; Core Purpose, Values; Structure and more!
- Welcome Kit: This includes everything such as Houle FAQ to post in their cubicle/office, Employee Checklist, navigating instructions for our ERP system: JDE, and more! The Employee is especially important It is parallel to the Manager Checklist and guides the manager/employee relationship throughout the first month.
- Employee Handbook and Policies: A large part of the orientation is explaining the employee’s responsibility and having them sign-off a Statement of Acknowledgement. After the orientation, once the employee settles at their desk, they are instructed to review our Employee Handbook and Policies section on our intranet. Ensuring this is the first piece of information they read, is vital to setting up employee expectations and assisting them as they navigate their first day, week, month, and beyond!
- Swag: We want new employees to start representing Houle right away so we supply them with swag like a branded clothing, water bottle, and/or a binder as soon as they walk in the door!
- Office Tour: The last part of the orientation consists of an office tour. Where is the lunch room? Where does the CEO sit? And of course, where is my desk? Either HR or the manager will guide the new employee through the office tour and introduce them to their colleagues along the way.

### People Updates and TV Updates

One of the goals of our onboarding process is to make the employee feel special; you only have a first day on the job so many times! We broadcast our New Hire Welcomes (“Hellos”) in various spots, including on People Updates on our Inside Houle internal platform. Also, “Hellos” are listed on the TV’s in lunchrooms at all offices.

### Meeting Key Employees

Depending on the new employee’s role, we organize meetings for new employees in their first week to meet with key individuals, including leadership, management, and executives. This assists new employees in understanding our business and how we operate.

### Welcome Lunch

The morning of a new hire’s day is packed with introductions, paperwork, and learning. A welcome lunch is arranged with the manager and often some teammates. This allows for social time to get to know one another.

### Intranet Training

Where do I go to get my pay stub? Where do I find an organizational chart? How do I book time off? What about my job description? All very common questions (and more)! We like to proactively answer with Intranet Training. Our Intranet, Inside Houle, encompasses all of this information and more. This training happens in the employees first few days, as this is important, but secondary to engraining the employee in our culture.

### Onboarding Survey for Feedback – 6 Week Check-In

After six weeks an employee starts at Houle, we follow up with both the employee and their manager on how their onboarding is going. This gives the manager a chance to provide feedback



The screenshot shows a survey titled "New Hire Survey" with the Houle logo at the top. It contains six questions with radio button options for "Yes" and "No":

1. What is your name? (Text input field)
2. Was your manager/supervisor expecting you when you arrived?
  - Yes
  - No
3. Was your desk and work space set up with all of the necessary items for you to properly perform your job functions?
  - Yes
  - No
4. Was your email and Houle Central log in set up and ready to operate?
  - Yes
  - No
5. Were you taken on a building tour and shown the location of: necessary equipment and tools, emergency exits including an explanation of emergency procedures, office supplies, break room, washrooms etc.?
  - Yes
  - No
6. Were you introduced to all departmental co-workers and the management team?
  - Yes
  - No

*New Hire Onboarding*

on how the employee is fitting in. It gives the employee a chance to voice anything that may have been missed. At this point, we also conduct an Onboarding Survey with the employee via Survey Monkey.

### **90 Day Check-In and 3 Month Review**

At the 3-month mark, all new employees receive a 90 Day Check-in with their manager to ensure the employee is succeeding in their role, learning at an appropriate speed, and fitting in with the team. Pending this is all going well, we move ahead with a 3 month review. The manager reviews the employee performance to identify the focus areas for coaching and to celebrate areas that are going well. During this review, SMART goals and training plans for the remainder of the year are set.

### **Recognition**

Houle strives to recognize employees in various ways that appeal to all demographics within the organization. We understand that both formal and informal recognition is important and encourage both.

The most formal type of recognition we provide is Service Awards. In addition to this, we encourage peer-to-peer recognition through Kudos Corner, a digital space where employees can post thank you messages to their peers. The space is visible to all employees at Houle, and anyone can post a message. When an individual is recognized, they receive an email notification that includes a link to Kudos Corner, so they can read the message that was shared about them by their colleague. Kudos Corner is an easy way to connect all of our staff across the company, as we have multiple branches and divisions.

Another way we like to recognize our staff is through Customer Shout-Outs, which shares positive customer feedback that we've received from our clients about an individual, or team, at Houle. The shout-outs are shared as a story that is posted to our company intranet, Inside Houle. The stories share positive customer feedback that we receive about our employees across all divisions.

Last year, we introduced a new incentive program, as discussed in the Salary component of the report, to recognize and reward our employees' efforts.

## **Employee Growth Opportunities**

Our people are the engine behind our business, and the development of our people and culture remains a key component of our One Houle strategy. To be an employer of choice, we continue to invest in our people. We've seen increased engagement as a result of investments in growth and development, recognition, and employee well-being, and we've been certified as a Great Place to Work in Canada for two years in a row.

### **Training and Courses**

Houle believes in investing in our people through learning and development so that they remain engaged in their careers at Houle, while also continuing to support Houle in achieving our business goals each year. Houle focuses on a 3-Tier Learning and Development Approach, which includes individual contributors, managers and field supervisors, and executives and senior leadership. For each tier, we offer tailored learning and development programs.

For individual contributors, we offer Project Manager Assessment and Development Program, Online Training Platform, Behavioural Training Program – Communication, Negotiation, Conflict Resolution,

Problem Solving, Specialized Technology Training, Trades Training, and Internal Training Programs led by subject matter experts.

For managers and field supervisors, we provide a Manager Orientation and Development Program, Online Training Platform, Individual Development Plans, and the Field Leadership Program. Manager and supervisor training focus on communication, conflict resolution, performance management, motivating others and much more.

For executives and senior leadership, we offer a Coaching Program for Senior Leaders, Outbound Workshop on Transformational Leadership, Individualized Programs for Growth, Development, and Executive Level Succession Planning.

## **In-House Technology Solutions and Top Industry Talent**

Part of what separates us from any other electrical contractor in BC is our diverse Technologies group. Working in a rapidly changing world, we continue to invest in these teams with ongoing certification and training in the newest technology. Being a certified supplier of high-end products, and in some cases, an exclusive provider helps differentiate us in the industry and attract specific clients.

To better incorporate technology with training, a small team has started to develop an innovative internal program called, “Houle School.” The purpose of this project is to advance our value of quality and better meet the increased onboarding demands for large complex projects. We are capturing best practices and knowledge from senior staff and developing a centralized, digital training platform accessible to all field staff. This strategic initiative aims to improve the quality of our installations by providing the best in-class service.

## **Performance Management Program**

Houle launched a new Performance Management Program in 2021 which includes individual goal setting and outlines well-defined KPI’s that directly relate to our company goals. This ensures employees across our organization are working towards the same goals, and performing as One Houle. The program includes establishing expectations (goals and KPI’s), ongoing coaching and feedback, and measurement outcomes acquired from performance evaluations. This new program is a means of getting better results by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards, and skill requirements.

As a part of the implementation process, all the employees and managers received training that included: the purpose of the program, setting goals and KPI’s, identifying training requirements, and a follow up.

Under this new program, there is an increased focus on setting SMART goals for the employees. These mutually agreed upon goals, will provide employees with visibility into how their work ties into the overall goals of the division, department, and company — helping provide clarity around company priorities.

Over the years we have been building a culture of continuous performance at Houle by encouraging managers to conduct regular check-ins with their team members to ensure that employees get the appreciation and coaching they need along the way. This helps employees know where they stand and where they may need improvement.

## Manager Effectiveness

Houle continuously strives to support our managers in building their managerial and leadership skills so they are more effective at leading their teams. To help gain insight into how our managers are performing in their roles, we conduct an Annual 360 Feedback Survey that collects input from the employee in the manager role, as well as feedback from their manager, their direct reports and their peers. The survey provides a well-rounded view of the manager's skills and behaviours to help them grow in their roles. We collect ratings confidentially through an online system from all parties who provided input. Survey questions reflect on critical managerial behaviour traits. Participants providing feedback choose between six possible choices based on their observation of their manager.

The results of each survey are compiled in a report and presented in graphic format with a brief analysis of strengths and areas of development. This feedback report is delivered by the individual's manager and the two have a meeting to discuss the results and set an action plan to work on critical skills highlighted in the report. To support our managers in the development planning process, we also have a guide outlining the suggested development actions.

## Job Mobility

Houle's HR Team advertises job opportunities both internally and externally, as we believe in providing growth and career development for our existing staff, but also are keen to seek out new talent to add to our organization. All job postings are listed on Houle's company website, social media platforms and with professional associations. Houle does not have a separate page for internal job postings, as we believe in complete transparency. We also make an effort to send internal communications to staff about new job opportunities that have just been posted to our careers page, so they are encouraged to review the postings.

Sharing current job opportunities with our existing staff is a part of our retention strategy, as we want to engage current staff to provide referrals, but also encourage them to grow their career at Houle by considering other opportunities within the organization. This ensures we keep our top performers engaged by offering them the opportunity to take on new and exciting challenges at Houle.

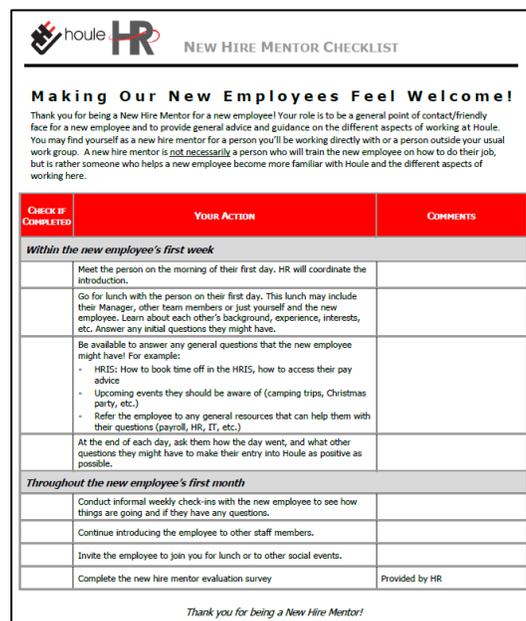
Additionally, we announce employee role changes across the company through our People Updates communications page, which is posted on our company intranet, Inside Houle. This communication is updated weekly or as necessary. Providing this information ensures we remain transparent and encourages other employees to grow their careers at Houle.

Some examples of employee role changes include one of our Quality Assurance and Quality Control Turnover Coordinators transitioning to the role of Junior Project Manager/ Estimator. This employee was on a temporary contract working on a specific project for Houle, but we decided to offer them a permanent position with Houle once their contract ended. When we identify talent that aligns with Houle's values, we make an effort to keep them at Houle, as we know they will make a valuable contribution to the organization and will grow with us for years to come.

## New Hire Mentor Program

Over the years, we found that it is integral to connect new hires to as many employees as possible, to ensure there is a space to ask questions and really get to know the organization through someone other than their direct manager. We created the New Hire Mentorship Program to provide new Houle employees with a New Hire Mentor who can act as a general point of contact/friendly face during the new employee’s first month at Houle.

A new hire mentor is not necessarily a person who will train the new employee on how to do their job. Rather, it is someone who helps a new employee become more familiar with Houle and the different aspects of working here. We provide the Program Overview and Checklist to the mentors for guidance and follow up in the months after to see how the partnership went.



**houle HR NEW HIRE MENTOR CHECKLIST**

**Making Our New Employees Feel Welcome!**

Thank you for being a New Hire Mentor for a new employee! Your role is to be a general point of contact/friendly face for a new employee and to provide general advice and guidance on the different aspects of working at Houle. You may find yourself as a new hire mentor for a person you'll be working directly with or a person outside your usual work group. A new hire mentor is *not necessarily* a person who will train the new employee on how to do their job, but is rather someone who helps a new employee become more familiar with Houle and the different aspects of working here.

| CHECK IF COMPLETED                               | YOUR ACTION   | COMMENTS       |
|--|---|----------------|
| <i>Within the new employee's first week</i>      |   |                |
|  | Meet the person on the morning of their first day. HR will coordinate the introduction.   |                |
|  | Go for lunch with the person on their first day. This lunch may include their Manager, other team members or just yourself and the new employee. Learn about each other's background, experience, interests, etc. Answer any initial questions they might have.   |                |
|  | Be available to answer any general questions that the new employee might have! For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HRIS: How to book time off in the HRIS, how to access their pay advice</li> <li>- Upcoming events they should be aware of (camping trips, Christmas party, etc.)</li> <li>- Refer the employee to any general resources that can help them with their questions (payroll, HR, IT, etc.)</li> </ul> |                |
|  | At the end of each day, ask them how the day went, and what other questions they might have to make their entry into Houle as positive as possible.   |                |
| <i>Throughout the new employee's first month</i> |   |                |
|  | Conduct informal weekly check-ins with the new employee to see how things are going and if they have any questions.   |                |
|  | Continue introducing the employee to other staff members.   |                |
|  | Invite the employee to join you for lunch or to other social events.  |                |
|  | Complete the new hire mentor evaluation survey  | Provided by HR |

*Thank you for being a New Hire Mentor!*

New Hire Mentor Checklist

## Equity and Diversity at Houle Electric

Houle is committed to creating diversity in the workplace as we understand the value of bringing people together who have different backgrounds and experience. Over the years, we have implemented policies and programs that have aided in driving our inclusive culture and supporting diversity. We also ensure equity in compensation by regularly benchmarking our salaries – Explained in detail in the section above.

This has grown as an area of strategic importance for Houle. We were pleased with our Great Places to Work survey scores of 90 percent in the areas of diversity and inclusion, but we believe there is still work to be done. We are currently developing a Diversity & Inclusion strategy, including the creation of an internal committee. Additionally, we have been supporting the following initiatives:

- Truth & Reconciliation training and education
- Outreach & partnerships with Indigenous communities
- Unconscious bias training for managers
- Using gender-neutral titles
- Ensuring pay equity through pay benchmarking
- Signed on to the Period Promise with the United Way

Our people are our greatest asset and we are committed to our employees. We offer employee programs that encourage and support a safe, positive, and productive work culture so that employees can perform to their best abilities. We believe these programs help to retain our employees and make Houle an employer of choice. We show our commitment in the following ways:

**Respect in the Workplace – Discriminatory Harassment Bullying Policy:** We have an official policy that addresses respect in the workplace, discriminatory harassment, and bullying. This policy, first published in March 2012, communicates our commitment to being an equal opportunity employer and our commitment to maintaining a positive and productive work environment where all people are treated with

dignity and respect. Every employee is required to sign off on this policy annually and commit to upholding a safe and respectful work environment for all.

***Guidelines for Dealing with Discriminatory Harassment & Bullying on the Job***: To ensure our Site Supervisors know how to properly deal with discriminatory harassment and bullying situations, we provide them with a guideline on how to diffuse and report the situation. We strive to share the guide with all Site Supervisors annually so the process remains fresh in their minds.

***Be More Than A Bystander Training***: To educate all our Site Supervisors on bullying, harassment and violence against women in the construction industry, we launched a training program in March 2019 called *Be More Than A Bystander* for our Site Supervisors. The training educates Site Supervisors on how to manage and discourage bullying/harassment targeted at women working on construction jobsites.

***Speak Up***: We encourage all employees to speak up if they witness unsafe acts, fraud, bullying, harassment, violence, unethical acts, and illegal acts. The *Speak Up* program provides employees with a confidential way of communicating their concerns to our Chairman of the Board, without fear of reprisal.

## **Equal Opportunity Employment**

Houle's HR Team advertises job opportunities both internally and externally, as we believe in providing growth and career development for our existing staff, but also are keen to seek out new talent to add to our organization.

In addition to our hiring practices, we fully support internal transitions as well. We encourage our field staff who are keen to expand their career path and continuing growing with Houle by offering them an office position as a Project Manager. Their unique experience and knowledge from the field strengthen our project teams and their ability to deliver projects for our clients.

We also value a positive attitude and passion for learning. Houle takes pride in training our employees and will ensure that each new hire is assigned a new hire mentor, and also receives new hire training. In order for our business to succeed, we must welcome new talent to our organization and leverage new knowledge to help grow our existing team.

## **Values Based Hiring**

Finding candidates that align with our core values is just as important as finding candidates that match our required experience level and skill set. We ask a set of behavior-based questions during the interview process to identify who can truly move us to the next level and will likely be around for the long term.

## **Supporting Indigenous Communities**

We attend local job fairs targeting Indigenous communities to help educate and provide direction on how to enter the electrical trade, as well as accept applications from interested candidates. Every year we send our HR Advisor who specializes in recruitment, and our Indigenous Relations representative to attend these events. Additionally, we participate in celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day to further build our relationship with local Indigenous communities. Participating in events and training helps ensure continued diversity and recognition of our local Indigenous groups at Houle. As part of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action*, we rolled out training, to support our commitment to *Call to Action 92 (Corporate Sector)*.

## Supporting Women in the Trades

We participate in local events and job fairs that support and encourage women in the trades. In April 2021, we sent one of our female Project Managers to the Women Build BC 2021 Conference to participate in a panel discussion on “Moving off the Tools: Exploring the Diversity of Trades Related Careers”. In 2019, we sent female apprentices to the Electrical Joint Training Committee (EJTC) “Women’s Open House” event to represent Houle and encourage other women to join the electrical trade. By participating in these types of community events, we are able to make a positive impact on women both currently working in the trades, and those who are interested in entering the trades.

We committed to using inclusive and gender-neutral language earlier in 2021. We transitioned from the traditional title of “Foreman” to “Site Supervisor” and switched the title of “Journeyman” to Journeyperson”. We want all employees to feel they are represented and can grow their career to the highest level at Houle. As such, we felt it was important to change the way we speak and write about the roles and job titles in the field.

For our efforts, Houle was recognized as a Community Champion Award for the Builders Code Awards 2021 presented by the BC Construction Association for promoting career opportunities for women in the skilled trades, supporting tradespeople to mentor others, and promoting education, awareness and training that positively impacts the community, company and employees.

## Builders Code Pledge

On March 8, 2019, we became an official partner of the Builders Code initiative by taking the “*Acceptable Worksites*” pledge. Through the pledge, Houle committed to following a standard code of conduct on all our job sites which ensures zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying, harassment, and hazing. Additionally, the pledge works to ensure that everyone is treated equally and made to feel safe on site.

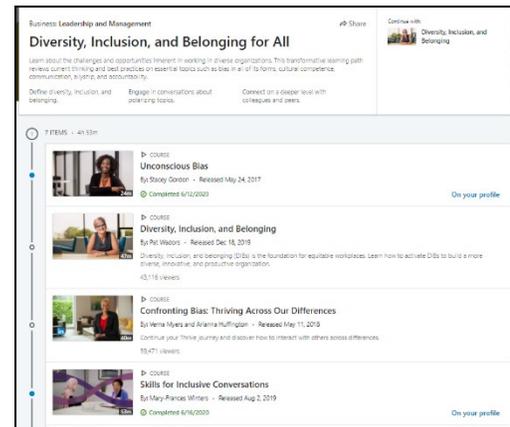
## Women in Leadership

We make an effort to ensure diversity exists at every level of our organization, including leadership. We have a mix of both men and women in leadership positions and are working towards growing this diversity. Comparing our numbers from June 2019, we have increased the number of women in leadership/management positions across the company from 16% to 20%. At the Executive level, we significantly increased our numbers from 8% to 23%. These changes are small but show progress, progress we are proud to share and are excited to continuously improve upon.

## Unconscious Bias & Diversity Training

In 2020, Inclusion was incorporated into our core values. To support this, we provide unconscious bias and diversity training to managers to enable them to have more inclusive conversations and to foster a culture of equality. This training is administered through LinkedIn learning which allows people to learn at their own pace. The course topics include Unconscious Bias, Confronting Bias, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, Skills for Inclusive Conversations, Communication about Culturally Sensitive Issues, Communicating across Cultures, and Bystander to Upstander.

These courses have helped managers understand how to identify unconscious bias, as well as how to identify it in oneself and counteract it, how to interact with others across differences, and how to create inclusive environments that everyone can thrive in.



Diversity and Inclusion Training courses provided via LinkedIn Learning

## Apprenticeships and Training Skilled Workers

Houle is committed to provide apprenticeship opportunities to local people, in addition to the tools and training required for employees to develop and grow into their careers. We support the training and development of skilled works in the following ways:

**Electrical Apprenticeships:** We support up to 300 electrical apprentices each year as they train to become Red Seal Journeyman. Through our partnership with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union (IBEW), our apprentices are provided with various on-site learning opportunities throughout BC. Often beginning as Pre-Apprentices in our Prefabrication Shop, they are provided with a safe, controlled environment to begin their journey through the trade. While apprentices gain their hours required to navigate through the apprenticeship levels, Houle provides safety training (see below) to equip them to perform work at any job site.

**Skilled Trades Training Programs:** To ensure our electrical staff are equipped with the tools they need, we support their electrical code training courses. This ensures they are up-to-date on current processes and procedures to safely and efficiently perform work.

**Better SuperVision:** We provide our Site Supervisors with the opportunity to participate in an extensive supervisor training program facilitated by CLR BC (Construction Labour Relations). The program targets both new and experienced supervisors and covers a variety of topics, including leadership, teambuilding, productivity, coaching/mentoring, and leadership for safety excellence. Additionally, participants receive coaching to help them apply skills learned in the classroom to the jobsite. Participants work with their mentor (Site Supervisor) to ensure they are achieving the goals set in their learning plan and are continuously acquiring new knowledge and skills.

**First Aid Training:** Safety is our first priority. Every Site Supervisor is provided with first aid training. As we encourage safe practices, we support all field staff that requests that requests to take first aid training. We also have representatives in each office that have First Aid Level 1 or 2.

**Field Leadership Program:** The field leadership program provides an opportunity for employees to grow as a leader in the field. Designed for both emerging and existing Site Supervisors, the program provides the knowledge and skills that are required to be a successful leader in the field. This easily accessible program is offered online and learning is self-paced. Modules in the program include:

- Lean Essentials
- Business Essentials (getting started, online resources, project team, staying organized)
- Field Productivity (setting up a project, productivity on the job, finishing well)
- Health, Safety & Environment (leading in safety, safety documentation, health, safety, and the environment)

## Social Procurement Practices

At Houle, we are committed to implementing projects in ways that enhance our relationships with local communities to create shared value. As noted in the section above, we actively participate in local events and job fairs that support women in the trades, Indigenous people, and other minority communities. We regularly benchmark salaries and have established salary ranges to maintain pay equity and pay parity.

Engaging with our local communities is an important part of our strategy, and we were honored to receive the Best Electrician Silver for the Best of Kamloops 2021 Awards. Based on votes from the public, this award indicates our strong brand presence in BC's interior, and local recognition for the quality work we deliver.

We strive to ensure that as a corporate partner, we are working with and seeking guidance from Indigenous communities as we pursue and realize opportunities in the marketplace. Building and maintaining trusting relationships is an important aspect in the way we invest in and develop workforce capacity in Indigenous communities. The result is a safe, diverse, and inclusive workforce.

We make every effort to employ partnership members on all opportunities and ask all subcontractors to consider the same. We are committed to working with our Indigenous partners to understand and identify employment barriers and to the reduction of those barriers through targeted programming. We ensure that training will be dictated by community needs, not the needs of our company.

## Indigenous Education, Training, & Employment

We recognize Indigenous communities as important partners in the work that we do, as we work to partner with them to pursue and realize opportunities in the marketplace. We strive to work with locally-owned and operated Indigenous businesses whenever possible. Further, we employ Indigenous workers with required skill sets, while building capacity within the community. We also participate in the Workplace Alternative Trades Training (WATT) program, which provides training and support resources for Indigenous Peoples wishing to enter the trades.

Another such program we support is Electrical Trades Training Program (ELTT). Under this program, the EJTC provides grant money through the provincial government for Indigenous candidates to upgrade their math and physics skills in an eight-week course. Candidates who complete these upgrade programs move into the entry-level ELTT program. Upon completion of the ELTT, we work with the IBEW and EJTC to employ individuals and help them gain work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. Our Partners include:

- IBEW Local 213 (Lower Mainland / Okanagan)
- Electrical Joint Training Committee (EJTC)
- Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS)

## **Northwest Apprenticeship Network**

This network is a partnership between Indigenous nations, the trades industry, post-secondary institutions, and the government – established by Haisla Nation and Kitimat Valley Institute in 2018. Houle was also a founding partner and has since taken a leadership role within the network – actively finding employment for Indigenous workers.

Additionally, we are proactively reaching out to schools within Indigenous communities to inform youth of the opportunities in the electrical industry. We continue to hire high school students – supporting them through graduation and into electrical apprenticeship programs.

## **Indigenous Employment and Training Programs Supported by Houle:**

- Intro to Grid Connection, Solar PV Systems – Upper Nicola Indian Band, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. 2018
- Jobs North LNG – Kitsumkalum 2020
- Oil and Gas Industry Safety Certification Program – Westbank First Nation / Okanagan Training and Development Council. 2019
- Pathways to Driving – Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc. 2018
- Pathways to Driving – Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc. 2020
- Pathway to Electrical Construction – Partnered with IBEW: Local 213, ACCESS, & EJTC
- Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP)
- Women in Trades Training (WITT)
- Workplace Alternative Trades Training (WATT) – Partnered with IBEW: Local 230, 993, 1003

## **Indigenous Employment and Training Organizations Supported by Houle:**

- Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS)
- Aboriginal Training & Employment Centre (ATEC)
- Coast Salish Employment & Training (CSETS)
- First Nations Employment Society (FNES)
- Northwest Apprenticeship Network
- Okanagan Training and Development Council (OTDC)
- Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association (PGNAETA)

## **Mental Health Assistance**

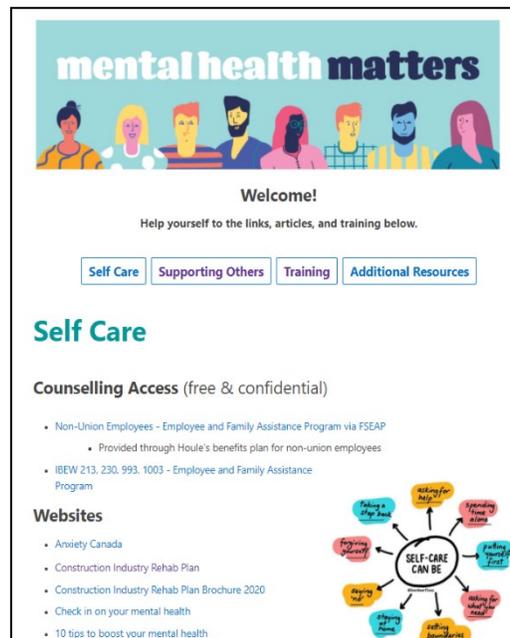
Safety, health and well-being of our employees is one of our core values. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, employee well-being has been a top priority for management. With a large remote workforce, managers have been conducting regular virtual one-on-one sessions to check-in on employees' mental well-being and resolve any concerns related to the pandemic or otherwise. Learning the personal situations of each team member, managers have been able to offer flexible work- arrangements, depending on individual needs. We have been holding virtual social hours and townhalls during the pandemic to help bring a sense of relief and community to employees.

In November 2020, we launched our “Mental Health Matters” initiative, to educate and bring more awareness to mental health and the support resources that are available for those struggling with mental health issues. The initiative targeted all of our employees, both union and non-union employees. The pandemic has caused many to feel increased stress and anxiety, whether working in the field or from home. By focusing on mental health, we hope our employees feel supported and know they are not alone in trying to cope with the unique circumstances that the pandemic has brought upon all of us.

The “**Mental Health Matters**” initiative included the following:

### Resources for Self-Care

Houle created an internal webpage for Mental Health Matters and provided links to online resources (websites and articles) focusing on self-care and how to manage one’s mental health. Examples of some resources provided include Houle’s EAP (FSEAP), a link to the “Anxiety Canada” website, and links to helpful articles such as “10 tips to boost your mental health”.



Mental Health Matters resources

### Resources for Supporting Others

We created an internal webpage for Mental Health Matters, and provided online resources (websites, articles, videos) dedicated to helping others who are struggling with mental health issues. The goal is to provide resources to help managers identify potential mental distress in their direct reports, or that employees would be able to check-in with their colleagues and provide words of support and point them toward available resources.

### Mental Health Training

*Training for Executive Leadership and Managers* – The “Mental Health 101” course provided by CAMH (Centre for Addiction & Mental Health) was completed by leadership and managers to ensure they could identify the signs of mental health issues and understand how to address the situation and provide support resources. Some of the topics covered in the course included the impacts of mental health problems, signs of mental health problems, treatment, and supporting mental health and recovery. In total, 78% of our people managers completed the training.

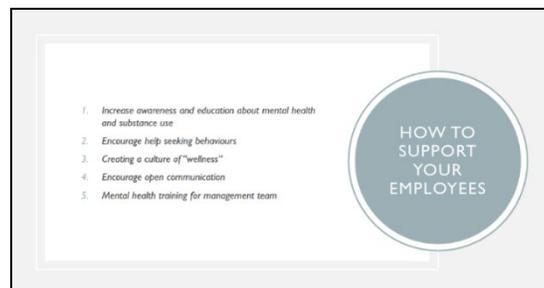
*Training for Superintendents* – Our field leaders participated in two online courses: “Living Works Start” (provided by Living Works Education Inc.) and “Skillfully Responding to Distress” (provided by Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention BC), both of which focused on suicide prevention. Topics covered in these courses included how to recognize signs of distress, stress response, de-escalation model, and providing support in getting help. In total, 96% of our field leaders completed the “Living Works Start” course, and 100% completed the “Skillfully Responding to Distress” course.



*Training for all Employees* – We partnered with the Construction Industry Rehab Plan (CIRP) to host a series of live webinars on mental health and addiction. The webinars focused on how these issues have been amplified by the pandemic and what support resources are available to help those struggling. These

webinars were an opportunity for employees at all levels to educate themselves further on the topic of mental health and addiction. Each webinar had a different target audience and theme as listed below:

- Webinar for Managers & Site Supervisors - Theme: *Helping your teams – How to spot signs of poor mental health and provide resources.*
- Webinar for All Employees – Theme: *When two pandemics collide: Managing your mental health in times of crisis.*
- Webinar for Leadership – Theme: *Mental health and Substance use within the construction industry.*



Construction Industry Rehab Plan webinar

### Wellness Matters

To emphasize the importance of overall employee well-being, our HR team prepares a quarterly newsletter that offers health, nutrition, and wellness tips for all employees. Employees also have the option to sign up for an individual online account to receive updates and news to directly to their emails.

### Pregnancy, Parental & Family Responsibility Leave

We offer pregnancy and parental leave in alignment with the *BC Employment Standards Act*. We also offer Family Responsibility Leave, which provides up to five days of unpaid leave per year to help with the care, health, or education of a child under the age of 19 in their care, or any other immediate family member. Additionally, we enjoy celebrating the arrival of our employees’ babies with a gift that includes a Houle branded onesie.

### Service Awards

Each year in December, we award gifts to all employees who have reached service milestones with the company. Service awards are given out every five years starting in the fifth year of service. This formal recognition is companywide and shows our appreciation and loyalty to our staff.

### Family Service and Employee Assistance Program (FSEAP)

Houle’s benefits through BCCA include an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provided through Family Services and Employee Assistance Program (FSEAP). By offering this benefit, Houle aims to provide employees with access to the guidance and support they need before their health, family, or ability to work are impacted. Access to this program is available to all permanent, full-time, non-union, employees. Offering confidential support and access to qualified counselling professionals, FSEAP supports employees with both personal and work-related problems. FSEAP counsellors are located throughout BC and hold at least a master’s degree in counselling or social work, and have at least five years of clinical experience. Services are available 24-hours a day and are offered either by phone, zoom call (virtual), or in-person. Employees can also access support and resources through FSEAP’s website and an online portal. FSEAP counselling covers a diverse range of topics, some of which include:

- Family and relationship problems
- Addictions and substance abuse
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Family violence and abuse
- Grief and loss

For a full list of topics covered through FSEAP counselling, refer to the website <https://www.fseap.ca/>.

For Union employees the Employee Assistance Program is available through locals-  
<http://213pension.org/health-welfare/member-family-assistance-program/> - For Local 213 members  
<https://www.workhealthlife.com/?lang=en-CA> – For Local 230, 993, 1003 members

### Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan (CIRP)

As a member of the construction industry, all Houle employees have access to the Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan (CIRP). CIRP is a non-profit, joint union/management-sponsored alcohol and drug treatment program, providing mental health and substance use services to the construction industry located in BC and the Yukon Territories. Employees can access this service by contacting CIRP directly through their website or by phone or email.

Support services offered include: Individual Counselling, Day Programs, Residential Treatment, Family Program, Telehealth Services (via Skype, online, phone, text), Opioid Free Pain Service

Refer to the website <https://www.constructionrehabplan.com/family-program/> for full details on services provided.

## Bettering the Construction Community

As a larger electrical contractor with 78 years of experience, we strive to contribute to the betterment of the construction community. For our continuous efforts, last year, Houle was recognized as a Community Champion Award for the Builders Code Awards presented by the BC Construction Association. This award recognizes companies that promote career opportunities for women in the skilled trades, support their tradespeople to mentor others, and promote education, awareness and training that positively impacts their community, company and employees.

We are an active member of various industry associations – we participate on boards and advisory panels and membership in these associations allow us to connect with others in the industry, advocate for our industry, and contribute to important industry initiatives. Membership also helps us provide professional growth for our employees, through industry-specific training and general workshops.

Audiovisual and Integrated Experience Association (AVIXA)  
BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCCWITT)  
BC Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA)  
BC Hydro PowerSmart Alliance ID #4296  
Building Industry Consulting Service International (BICSI)  
Building Owners and Managers Associations of Canada (BOMA)  
Canadian Electrical Contractors Association (CECA)  
Canadian Healthcare Engineering Society (CHES)

Canadian Security Association (CANASA)  
Construction Labour Relations Association of BC (CLR)  
Electrical Contractors Association of British Columbia (ECABC)  
National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA)  
Northern Regional Construction Association (NRCA)  
Southern Interior Construction Association (SICA)  
Vancouver Island Construction Association (VICA)  
Vancouver Regional Construction Association (VRCA)

## Communities Engagement

We care about community. Sharing our skills and resources with the communities where we live, work, and do business is a key element of our corporate responsibility. With our strong corporate culture of community involvement, we are committed to serving and strengthening our communities. Our company and employees donate time, money, and supplies to many exceptional causes.

### Organizations/Foundations we have Supported:

BC Children's Hospital Foundation  
BC Cerebral Palsy Association  
Camosun College Foundation  
Canadian Red Cross  
CKNW Kid's Fund  
Clements Centre Society  
Comox Valley Food Bank  
Greater Vancouver Food Bank  
Heart & Stroke Foundation  
HeroWork Canada  
Kamloops SPCA  
Kelowna's Gospel Mission  
Kitimat Chamber of Commerce  
Kitimat Food Bank  
Lions Gate Hospital Foundation  
Loaves and Fishes Food Bank  
Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau  
Movember Foundation  
Prince George Hospice Society  
Orange Shirt Day  
Our Place  
Rest Haven Lodge  
Rotary Club of Merritt – Flood Relief  
Santa's Anonymous  
Salvation Army  
St. Vincent De Paul's Society  
Surrey Christmas Bureau  
The Door is Open  
The Hope Centre  
The Mustard Seed  
The Zone 91.3 Toy Drive  
United Way of Northern BC  
Vancouver Island University Trades Program  
Numerous Team Sponsorships

March 1, 2022

Vancouver Island Construction Association  
1075 Alston Street  
Victoria, BC V9A 3S6

Re: 2022 Awards of Excellence

On behalf of myself and the Executive Team, we are pleased to put forth our nomination for the 2022 Awards of Excellence: Employer of the Year Award. Our success is a direct reflection of the calibre of our employees. Each one of our employees is a valuable part of our team and our future – as such, we are committed to retaining the best talent and to creating a safe and inclusive workplace culture for all our employees.

### **Safety: Our First Priority and Core Value**

As a COR certified company since 2009, we are committed to protecting the well-being of workers and to maintaining a safety culture on our job sites. We allocate the necessary resources to maintain a comprehensive health and safety program – this includes, but is not limited to, employing safety representatives on our job-sites, providing safe work procedures on construction sites, and ensuring that all employees have proper training to safely perform their job. All employees actively participate and contribute to our safety program.

### **Employee Engagement: Attracting Top Talent and Retaining Long-Standing Employees**

Creating a positive work atmosphere is important at Houle. This starts with our Leadership Team who drives our flexible and open culture. There are many ways we cascade this to our employees, including business casual dress code; open-door policy; flexible work hours and hybrid work arrangements; social events and activities that bring people together; and monthly town hall meetings that promote transparency and connects employees with information about company initiatives and corporate updates.

To attract and retain top talent, we offer a competitive benefits package and incentive plan – this includes a matching RRSP program, access to Employee and Family Assistance Program, access to mental health and addiction care services through the Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan, and a fitness reimbursement program. Benefits for union employees are administered by the IBEW Union.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Embracing and Encouraging our Employees' Differences**

This has grown as an area of strategic importance for Houle. We are committed to inclusion, diversity, and belonging. We foster, cultivate and preserve a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion as well as support an environment that is respectful and free from harassment of any nature. We believe this leads to enhanced innovation, creativity, productivity, reputation, engagement and belonging.

Our Great Places to Work survey scored 90 percent in the areas of diversity and inclusion, but we believe there is still work to be done. We are currently developing a Diversity & Inclusion strategy, including the creation of an internal committee and have been supporting the following initiatives: Truth & Reconciliation training and education, outreach & partnerships with Indigenous communities, unconscious bias training for managers, using gender-neutral titles, ensuring pay equity through pay benchmarking, signed on to the Period Promise with the United Way.

We are proud of our programs and initiatives that invest in the development of our employees, promoting a safe, diverse, and inclusive workplace, and we remain committed to making positive contributions to enhance the growth and success of BC's construction sector.

Sincerely,



Amber Roberts, VP People & Culture  
604.434.2681 | aroberts@houle.ca