

## Jacinthe Nichols



# CUTTING EDGE GO-GETTER A GAME CHANGER AT DETTSON INDUSTRIES

Jacinthe Nichols has always made a difference at Dettson Industries – virtually from day one, as it turns out.

And the research and development (R&D) project leader at the HVAC powerhouse remembers what transpired then as if it happened yesterday.

“I was immediately exposed to some of the leading builders in North America,” says Nichols, featured by Green Building + Architecture magazine in its Women in Green initiative. “At the time, they explained to me the issues they were having with air stratification, uneven temperatures, loud systems and comfort ... all a direct result of an oversized furnace.”

So Nichols and her Dettson team went right to work.

“We developed a low BTU furnace that can modulate to 40 per cent of its capacity. I then took it another step further and developed a 10-by-23-inch, 15,000 BTU furnace. Then we got started on pairing these small units with heat pumps.

“The result was a heating and cooling system that would use the heat pump as primary heat source and switch to gas (or a small electric furnace) to help on the coldest days.”

That was a mission accomplished for Nichols, and the stage was set for a surging repeat of innovative tendencies in subsequent years.

Nichols found that she thrived in the Dettson workplace milieu, which places a strong emphasis on employees demonstrating independent thought and the pursuit of ideas.

“I’ve worked many evenings and weekends and worked closely in the field to help Dettson get to where it is now,” she says. “But, then, so has our entire team. You’ll find that engineering and HVAC, in general, are two industries that tend to be male-dominated, so I enjoy breaking down the barriers and showing that women not only belong here, but can lead it.”

There are many R&D endeavours at Dettson that have fuelled her passion; they range from Habitat for Humanity projects to the passive and net-zero home efforts.



“First off, I am very excited about the net-zero and passive home movement,” Nichols says. “It’s growing year over year. Companies like Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN), the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) and the Canadian Home Builders’ Association (CHBA), are doing a fantastic job in promoting the benefits.

“Costs to build net-zero and passive continue to drop, further helping the uptake of builds. At the same time, it’s also very exciting to see the largest HVAC manufacturers beginning to develop smaller furnaces. It proves to us that we chose the right direction.

Besides her involvement with Habitat for Humanity projects across Canada and the United

States in building net-zero and net-zero-ready homes, Nichols has also participated in conferences, sessions and workshops, providing education to builders, contractors and wholesalers about the impact that building tighter homes has on their mechanicals.

For those interested in pursuing a similar career path, Nichols offers some sage advice.

“I think the first step for anyone is to find the right company to work for,” she says. “For me, I love the innovation and direction at Dettson. I have many people that I can lean on for assistance, but the bottom line is that Dettson does a great job at building independence and confidence to pursue ideas.

“I’ve put a lot of effort to find a career that makes me happy, but I realized it takes more than a great job to be fully happy. My husband and I are raising three kids and both working full-time jobs, but we still manage to be there for them and make them our priority.

“It’s a choice we made as a family, and it’s probably the best choice I’ve ever made.”

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*Dettson, a member of the Ouellet Group, provides sustainable solutions to the HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) industry by offering systems designed to maximize residential comfort.*

*This commitment is made possible by both the undertaking of its employees and the contribution of its partners in innovation. Dettson is known for its agility in developing sustainable solutions that contribute to home comfort in each of the North American climate zones, taking into consideration the different energy challenges, while recognizing the specifications of the Canadian and of the HVAC replacement market.*

*This potential is realized through responsible innovation in collaboration with a distribution network and intelligent business partners. Dettson also provides its employees with the necessary tools to design, offer and manufacture these products in a safe and cost effective manner.*