

An interview with Kathleen Nicholas,
Owner – Artemis Fire Consulting Inc.

written by Women Talk Fire
Amy Zourzouklis

What brought you to a career in fire and life safety?

My husband, Don, had been in the industry off and on for a number of years. He grew particularly disenchanted with the company with which he was working and said, “Why don’t we start our own company?” That was 30 years ago now and, while we’ve gone through many different iterations during that time, I have remained steadfast in my belief that this industry matters – DEEPLY.

Tell us about the road that brought you to where you are today with Artemis Fire Consulting?

Our original company started with ULC-listing for the inspection, testing, and maintenance of fire alarm systems. We felt that having that listing lent us strong backing and made a statement about the level of work that we not only believed in, but that we provided to our clients. By 2000, we had also achieved our ULC listing for the verification of fire alarm systems. However, it became far too frequent to arrive at a job site and find that the panel was still in a box on the floor, and the electrical installers were looking at us and saying, “But you install that, program it, and verify it – right?”

Tired of seeing under-trained electricians installing life safety systems, we chose to become general contractors for fire alarm upgrades in existing buildings. We have worked closely with one small electrical company to create simple, solid systems that serve the client’s needs, both now and during future maintenance and repair.

Throughout all of these years, the most important thing to me has been to serve the clients’ needs. I have slowly morphed over the last dozen years to working more as a code consultant primarily with strata corporations (condominium buildings). My understanding of both the governing Codes and standards, as well as the Acts that govern the Stratas, helps them to put the owners in the driver’s seat, by providing them with the information they need in order to make informed decisions about their life safety. I also focus on helping them to mitigate their risk and limit their liability when it comes to implementing life safety in their buildings.

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Was becoming a consultant your ultimate goal or did things change along the way?

Things have continued to change and grow over the decades. I never imagined that my many years of drafting in high school would translate into creating electrical plans for engineers, or riser and wiring schematics for installers. I have worked hard to pursue my passions, which strangely enough include seeing the links between various codes, standards, and acts – even if they don't seem to be connected at all. I have become an industry collaborator, working to bring the various industry stakeholders – engineers, designers, building & electrical officials, installers, verifiers, inspection providers, and AHJ's & fire departments – through the Fire Protection Association of B.C. (FPACB), of which I am the founding Secretary and current President. I have used my skills in conference creation and coordination, along with my ability to create a welcoming environment, to help establish and grow the BC FireCon, which is putting on its fourth annual conference this fall 2026.

I never imagined all of this when I first started out! I have grown within the industry and the industry has, hopefully, grown in part because of me and my input.

What has kept you in the industry?

Relationships. People ask what I do for a living and I reply: "I hold hands." In working with Stratas, I can be involved with their Council, owners' group, and property management for up to three years. I have been rewarded with some amazing friendships, as well as a prosperous business. Through the FPABC, my horizons have broadened, especially during the conference each year. I get to meet so many incredible presenters, company owners, technicians, and manufacturers who are all passionate about improving life safety in our province.

If you were starting over is there anything that you would do differently?

Aside from my husband being in the industry, prior to him, I simply didn't even know that this industry existed or that it held so much possibility for me. It has embraced so many of my disparate skills and abilities, giving me a welcoming home.

I think what I would tell young women coming in today is that the industry is so much bigger, so much more, than just being a fire alarm technician. Designing, administering projects, communicating with many different kinds of people, helping improve a whole industry upon which all of us rely to keep us safe. Explore the possibilities that match well with your skills: engineering, drafting, computer skills, fire safety planning, it's almost endless, the opportunities that are out there.

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What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be brave. Remember your Shakespeare: "Though she be but little, she is fierce" Believe in your skills, abilities, and knowledge even if you haven't yet found your place. Keep learning – ALWAYS learning. Read, watch videos, talk to elders for their decades of wisdom and youngers for their tech understanding!

Never let people tell you that you can't or that you don't belong. Those aren't your people.

And always be willing to stand up for what's right, for the Code and the Standards, even when people tell you, "But everyone does it this way!" Ethics ALWAYS matter.