

# TOP 10 UNDER 40

Meet the winners of *Pulp & Paper Canada's* second annual Top 10 Under 40 contest

BY KRISTINA URQUHART

The future of pulp and paper looks bright. Armed with a strong work ethic, initiative, curiosity, and a commitment to training and safety, the 2021 winners of our Top 10 Under 40 program are setting the bar for young professionals across the industry in management, operations, maintenance, sales, support and research.

Want to recognize a future leader? Nominations for the 2022 contest open at the end of this year. Congratulations to our 2021 winners!

## YU SUN

Manager, TMP & stock prep, Catalyst Crofton Crofton, BC



Yu Sun knows pulp and paper. When Sun, 36, joined Catalyst Crofton four years ago as an operations specialist, she brought four degrees with her: a bachelor's degree in environmental science, a master's degree in biotechnology, a second master's in environmental engineering, and a doctorate in pulp and paper engineering and chemistry.

After moving from her native China, Sun spent four years as a research assistant at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, which was where she earned her PhD, and another three years at the University of British Columbia as a postdoctoral research fellow at the school's Pulp and Paper Centre. There, she concentrated on pulp brightness after bleaching, and on reducing refining energy while improving pulp quality via chemical applications in the TMP process.

Only a year and a half after joining the Crofton mill, Sun was promoted to her current role "based on her early success and her ability to work well with both the operations crews, her area team and management," says Steve Bird, Catalyst Crofton's general manager. Now, Sun oversees mechanical, electrical and

instrumentation maintenance of the stock prep department, and liaises with the paper side to ensure pulp quality meets the specifications of the mill's 40-odd paper grades.

She's also active with PAPTAC as both a member and representative of Catalyst Crofton. In 2019, she co-authored and presented a paper at the PACWEST Conference, called "Benefits and successes of leveraging a KMAP tool in our TMP plant."

"Yu Sun is a very accomplished person for somebody still early in their career," says Bird.

## MATT BROERE

Technical services superintendent, Domtar Dryden, ON



At just 30 years old, Matt Broere oversees a team of 12 people who provide Domtar Dryden's technical support in quality, environment and production. Broere joined the mill as a process engineer in 2016, shortly after earning two bachelor's degrees in chemistry and chemical engineering from Lakehead University.

By 2017, he had moved up to operations supervisor of recaust/kiln, where he developed standard operating procedures, scheduled maintenance work and ensured compliance of safety, environment and quality.

Now, Broere's role extends to strategic development, reliability planning, continuous improvement and leadership workflows. In addition, he makes sure the quality specifications of the final product meet the needs of the mill's customers. His commitment to quality and safety are further seen in his management of the site's ISO 9001 quality program, and in his co-chairing of the joint occupational health and safety committee.

In their nomination, Marie Cyr, Domtar Dryden's general manager, and Rajanesh Kumar, production manager, say Broere "is a supportive leader, mentoring entry-level process engineers and providing strong coaching to enhance their development and exposure both within the organization and the industry.

He is viewed in very high regard by his peers and leaders."

As a mentor, Broere sets an example for his team by committing to his own professional development. He is a Certified Professional Engineer, certified Six Sigma Black Belt, and Project Management Professional, and he has completed training through both PAPTAC and TAPPI. He also led a conference for PAPTAC's bleaching committee in Dryden, and participated in presentations at PACWEST.

"He is no stranger to dedicating the time, hard work and energy to creative thinking and actively leading the Dryden team to successful results," say Cyr and Kumar.

## JAWAD JEAIDI

Process engineer, CanmetENERGY Varennes, QC



Work ethic, initiative, leadership, excellence, kindness — these are just some of the words that appeared repeatedly in Jawad Jaaidi's multiple nominations from colleagues throughout his pulp and paper career.

At 35, Jaaidi's contributions to the industry are already lauded. He's authored over two dozen technical papers for conferences, several peer-reviewed papers related to forestry transformation and the bioeconomy, and a book chapter. Jaaidi is particularly focused on retrofitting pulp and paper mills into biorefineries, exploring opportunities in lignin and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the industry.

Having started his career as a consultant for the manufacturing industry, Jaaidi joined CanmetENERGY, Natural Resources Canada's clean energy technology research centre, for the first time in 2014. He spent over four years as a process engineer, where he helped to create digital tools for process monitoring and optimization, before moving on to White Birch Paper's mill in 2018 to work as a continuous improvement coordinator and then a technical supervisor.

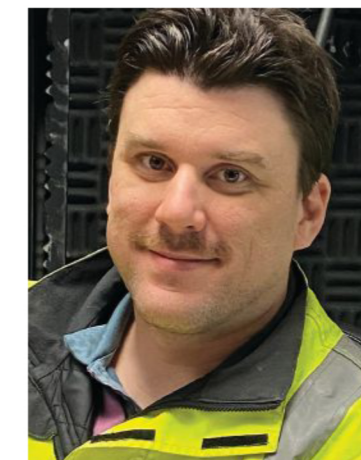
While there, he helped with an energy efficiency project on the paper machine's vacuum system that led to the development of a waste heat recovery system. In March 2021, Jaaidi rejoined CanmetENERGY, where he explores innovative solutions such as artificial intelligence applications in pulp and paper.

"His strategic thinking and ability to adapt and identify best global practices made him contribute significantly to projects such as the commissioning and qualification of a new production line and successful application of grant proposals for energy-efficiency projects," says colleague Oluoye Ajao. "This attests to his leadership qualities." So does Jaaidi's commitment to leadership skills training and courses in project management.

Says Ajao: "Many decades from now, we will still be able to look back and recognize his lasting impact on the Canadian pulp and paper industry."

## DEVIN KELLY

Operations specialist – machine room, Mercer Celgar Castlegar, BC



Devin Kelly "has a passion for continuous improvement that is unparalleled, and an ability to systematically problem solve that is beneficial to the success of the area," says his manager Jeff Dechaine.

Consider this: Kelly, a third-generation pulp and paper worker, professional engineer and Six Sigma Green Belt, has led multiple improvement initiatives in his five years

in the machine room, including a profiling steam box design, construction and install for PM1, vacuum optimization and PH control design projects for the pulp machine, and production loss analysis implementation and tracking.

"He has developed disciplined systems that will outlive his tenure and that are valuable tools to ensure the future success of the department," says Dechaine.

Colleagues and vendors say that what makes Kelly, 37, special are his eagerness to learn, his ability to ask thoughtful questions, and his penchant for rallying the team. One vendor credited Kelly's synthesis of information, risk mitigation and change process management as the reasons a press efficiency project was able to move forward with upgrades.

In addition to working on his chops in improvement, Kelly is chair of the area Safety Captain Committee and has completed interview and supervisor training.

"The passion, commitment, and energy that he puts into his role here at Mercer has led to significant reliability, production and morale improvements," says Dechaine. "He is a leader beyond his years, and a shining example of what the next generation of leaders in our industry can be."

## HARPUNEET GHUMAN

Section lead, energy & carbon, West Fraser Timber Co. Quesnel, BC

In eight years, Harpuneet (Perry) Ghuman has risen the ranks at West Fraser, earning four promotions including to his current role.

As section lead for energy and carbon, the 33-year-old Ghuman manages the company's energy and emissions strategy across all mills. He works directly with government, energy providers, consultants and experts to inform energy projects and policies at the company.

After earning his undergraduate degree in chemical engineering in India, where he was born, Ghuman moved to Canada



in 2011 to obtain his master's degree in natural resources and environmental studies at the University of Northern British Columbia. He joined West Fraser's Quesnel River pulp mill in 2013 as a lab technician before moving to a process engineer role in charge of compliance to ISO 9001.

Before assuming his current role, Ghuman spent just over a year as industrial energy manager at the mill, during which time he earned his Professional Engineer credentials and directed multi-stakeholder projects including a process upgrade that saved 50 GWh/year, and a steam optimization project that could reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 10,000 tonnes/year.

Sam Walker, energy management consultant at Stillwater Energy, says that one of the notable things about Ghuman is his humble attitude and appreciation of his peers.

"Perry is quick to remind people that the success of these projects is due to the teamwork of the technical, engineering and operations employees, and to the operators who identified and advocated for these opportunities from the start," Walker says. "He's an impressive emerging leader."

### JEAN-SÉBASTIEN VIENS

Director, demand and supply planning, Cascades  
Candiac, QC



Jean-Sébastien Viens has had a busy year. As the new director of demand and supply planning for the Cascades PRO business segment of Cascades Tissue Group, responding to the COVID-19 crunch on the market has been an additional challenge.

"He is a rising star in his field of supply chain, which has clearly been one of the most important fields in 2020/2021," says Annie Noel,

Viens' supervisor. "His strong knowledge of the tissue manufacturing operations, the equipment and the clients' needs are assets for the corporate team."

Viens, 34, became a Cascader in 2014 when he joined the converting plant in Granby, Que. as a production planner. In just over a year, he'd been promoted to corporate planner, a position he held until right before COVID hit. Now, as director of demand and supply planning, Viens oversees a team of production planners, distribution planners and demand planners across five conversion plants and seven warehouses.

Noel says Viens is a proponent of using technology to simplify and enhance experiences for staff and customers alike. After the company implemented a SAP IBP tool, Viens recorded training

videos for staff. "His goal was to promote and drive better planning to leverage production efficiencies but also to meet customer expectations," she says. "Learning and sharing knowledge is important to Jean-Sébastien."

Viens, who recently achieved his APICS certification from the Association of Supply Chain Management, regularly imparts his wisdom to his team via lunch-and-learn sessions.

"Jean-Sébastien embodies the value of fierce determination by continuously looking for solutions for the client and the company," Noel says. "He is an excellent example of a young, powerful, dedicated, knowledgeable and focused employee."

### ALI ELAHIMEHR

Senior scientist, development & implementation, FPIInnovations  
Vancouver, BC



Ali Elahimehr's specialty has been mechanical pulping ever since he graduated from the University of British Columbia's doctoral program in 2013. While there, he worked with a consortium of 16 companies to develop and test solutions for energy and cost reduction in mechanical pulping.

"His experimental and theoretical work with an enhanced model to understand the effect of refiner plate

design on refining performance was ground-breaking, enabling researchers to better predict energy-saving potential of refining," says Zhirun Yuan, Elahimehr's manager at FPIInnovations. "Over 10 years, Ali has had a leadership role in the development and implementation of energy-saving strategies resulting in more than 83 gigawatt-hours per year of clean electrical energy savings in B.C. — enough to power 7,644 homes for a year."

Elahimehr, 39, took his pulping expertise to West Fraser's Quesnel River Pulp in 2013. There, he served as process engineer for a BCTMP upgrade that included the development of the world's first LC-refining system in a \$15.4-million project. When Elahimehr was promoted to senior process engineer in 2016, he embarked on another project, this time with FPIInnovations and UBC, and developed a novel way to reduce energy on the BCTMP line.

"These projects provide strong examples of Dr. Elahimehr's ability to realize innovative new concepts for operational development that result in substantial environmental impact and energy savings for the benefit of the industry," says Yuan.

Now at FPIInnovations, Elahimehr is exploring new product development opportunities for mechanical pulp, and working with members to reduce cost and improve quality of TMP and BCTMP. He continually gives knowledge back to the community through peer-reviewed papers and conference presentations.

### ANDREW WASIK

Chief operating officer, Aurel Systems  
Vancouver, BC

As Andrew Wasik, 37, prepares to take over the family busi-



ness from his dad, Larry, "he is wearing many hats for our small outfit," says Renaud Daenzer, manager of mineral processing at Aurel Systems.

As COO, Wasik acts as Aurel's project manager, business development manager and customer relations manager. He started his career developing software and C++ modules for the company's CADSIM Plus process simulation program.

"He has developed complete machine room whitewater mass and energy balances for Tembec, a fully functional operator training simulator at West Fraser's Hinton mill, and helped execute and deliver an array of projects with strict timelines for consultants servicing the pulp and paper industry," says Daenzer.

Wasik is generous with professional development opportunities, Daenzer says. In addition to sharing his own knowledge with industry at conferences such as PAPTAC's PaperWeek, Wasik ensures his colleagues have the equipment, software and training they need to succeed. When the pandemic hit, Wasik quickly delivered workstations to the homes of his staff and enabled secure processes so they could do their job remotely.

"Leaders of his nature are few and far between," says Daenzer of Wasik. "His work ethic and capacity for multitasking is incredible, his communication style is effective and compassionate and above all he is a true family man, displaying the same values to the Aurel Systems family as to his own."

### MAHIMA SHARMA

Director, environment, innovation & mill regulations,  
Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC)  
Ottawa, ON



As she's climbed up in her career, Mahima Sharma, 34, has proven herself to be invaluable to FPAC's senior leadership team, says Derek Nighbor, FPAC CEO. "Her work is instrumental in ensuring that FPAC maintains its reputation for housing the latest and most relevant scientifically verified data on environmental performance," he says.

In her role, Sharma assesses environmental regulations for mills, analyzes and reports on sustainability measures, and works with FPAC's membership to communicate the stance of the forest products sector on issues pertaining to climate change, air, water and chemicals. She was also responsible for spearheading a partnership with Statistics Canada to ensure the government has access to current forest sector data through reporting by FPAC's membership.

As lead on the association's innovation file, Sharma is also hard at work promoting the part the forest sector plays in solutions to climate change and the low-carbon economy.

Sharma has been building on her knowledge ever since her post-secondary schooling, when she earned two bachelor's degrees in biochemistry and chemical engineering, and two master's degrees in chemical engineering and health administration. She cut her teeth in compliance when she joined FPAC in 2014 as an environmental analyst.

"Mahima has deep technical knowledge, a ready grasp on complex files, and is highly respected and trusted by her colleagues," says Nighbor. "She is an important conduit between the industry and the federal government on issues related to carbon, innovation and the forest bioeconomy."

### LEONARDO GOMEZ

Project coordinator, Mercer Peace River Pulp  
Peace River, AB



When Leonardo Gomez, 32, joined Mercer's Peace River mill in August 2015 as a junior project engineer-in-training (EIT), he was quick to impress the team, says supervisor Allison Quinney.

Gomez was fresh off a stint as an EIT in the energy sector, having completed his mechanical engineering technologist diploma at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at Lakehead University.

"Leo presented himself as a high achiever with a passion for learning and drive for success," Quinney says. "He has a keen ability to turn concepts and ideas into fruition based on methodical evaluation of various options, weigh the benefits and risk, and then apply this same methodology in execution."

As a result, Gomez identifies "the opportunity for the organization while mitigating financial risk exposure and optimizing net benefit," says Quinney. "This same approach has positioned him well to adapt to adverse conditions and determine the best outcome when faced with unexpected challenges, particularly in light of imminent construction deadlines during annual shutdowns."

This we'll-find-a-way attitude is what has carried Gomez through to his designation as a Professional Engineer, management of projects up to \$5 million, and assistance on an ongoing overhaul of the mill's wood room. It's also led him to dip into the fibre handling side, where he bridges projects and operational reliability, and to work on acquiring his Project Management Professional certification.

"Leo is a driven, dedicated and energetic team member who is always willing to go the extra mile to seek innovation, more responsibility and ways to deliver value to the MPR organization," says Quinney.

PPC