



## PPDT Certification: In French, *s'il vous plaît*

IN HIS ARTICLE “ETCP Certification raises the industry to a higher standard” that appeared in *Protocol's* Winter 2015 edition, lighting designer Robert J. Culley begins with a simple question: “Why should ETCP Certification be important to you?”

Culley answers by asking more questions: How important to you is a safer working environment, a more knowledgeable crew, increased self-worth or better job placement? With those queries, he wants us to realize that an ETCP Certification means way more than just passing an exam; it is about improving yourself, and by extension, your work environment. Indeed, if everybody gets on board, all those personal advantages come together to elevate the

whole industry to a higher calibre.

Here at IATSE Local 514, we strongly agree with that vision. In fact, we believe in it so much that we think it should be accessible to even more people.

In 2006, a group of people, including the Conseil Québécois des Ressources Humaines en Culture (CQRHC), the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology (CITT), and three IATSE 514 members, decided it was time to translate the certification exams for riggers (arena and theatre). And, since we wanted this first examination round (which took place in 2010) to set a positive example and inspire other technicians to follow the path of our first group, we created an intense workshop to prepare the eight IATSE 514

members who were taking the exams. This proved to be a great idea since all eight members became Certified Arena Riggers. To this day, we are proud to say that our IATSE Local has a 100% success rate for ETCP Certification.

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Following this success, we asked ourselves: “What’s next?” Well, why not keep up with ETCP and translate the brand new Portable Power Distribution Technician (PPDT) Certification? After all, we represent



IATSE Local 514 has made health and safety one of its top priorities. The Local's training program is free of charge to members.

technicians of the film industry, a good number of whom work with portable power distribution units on a regular basis.

As a union, this was an easy decision to make. We want our members to be the best, and we know our members want to be the best. Consequently, IATSE 514 is currently building an experienced team of industry experts and certified translators, following the same approach developed by CITT and CQRHC, to offer a French version of the exam that upholds the same high standards established by ESTA and ETCP.

But more specifically, why are we so motivated to bring ETCP Certifications to French-speaking workers? Going back to Culley's article, there is a sentence in it that really summarizes our philosophy: "Safety starts with a well-trained . . . crew." Ever since its creation ten years ago, Local 514 has made Health and Safety one of its top priorities. This is why we developed a solid training program that offers different courses—all free of charge—adapted to the nature of our members' craft. We believe that being the best at what you do positively affects everyone with whom you work. Sure, it increases effectiveness, but it also contributes to reducing the risks of accidents and bad habits that can put the safety of the whole crew in jeopardy.

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All of this to say, we deeply believe that good training is essential to safety, and since ETCP is clearly gaining increased recognition in our industry, it goes without saying that we naturally want our members to be ETCP Certified.

But the thing is, we are based in Montréal, which means that most people, including ourselves and our members, are native French speakers. While it is true that a

lot of people here are bilingual—or, at least have functional English—there is still a considerable difference between communicating basic, straight-forward information in a dynamic day-to-day work environment and taking a challenging and, for some, stressful exam in your second language. It should also be noted that taking a test in your native language ensures that you are evaluated on your actual skills rather than your reading comprehension.

In a sense, it is about removing the language barrier and offering equal opportunity to the technicians that want to be recognized as the best in their field. For example, as of today, IATSE 514 represents ten ETCP Certified riggers, eight of whom have benefited from the translation and the workshop.

Another, more practical, way to think about this issue would be in terms of a greater cohesion regarding terminology and protocol. Indeed, if you enable more people to receive an ETCP Certification by offering the exam in French, you also help create a pool of workers that use the same terms and share the same standard and vision.

Moreover, if you look at the bigger picture, those skilled certified members will eventually become mentors, passing their knowledge to the younger generation of technicians, and likely, inspiring them to pursue an ETCP Certification themselves.

Obviously, this last observation is true whether or not a French exam is available, but it is rather to illustrate that this trickling down of the knowledge will be exponential as the certification becomes more widely accessible, which ultimately promotes a more cohesive workforce. And, in our case, it even goes beyond your immediate coworkers since production companies that come to Montréal are—or, eventually will be—used to working with ETCP Certified technicians. If we are able to successfully promote ETCP Certification to Québec's workers, then when a production chooses to shoot here, they will know that we not only have highly qualified technicians—which is already the case—but, that they

follow the same high standards to which the production companies have come to expect. In a globalized world, a cohesive protocol is more important than speaking the same language.

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While it is true that we wish to offer the PPDT Certification because we acknowledge its value, we also think that the recognition of ETCP on an even larger scale can come from making it available in other languages. In other words, the sole fact that people are willing to put time and effort into translating something—like a great book, for example—speaks volumes about its quality. Translating ETCP exams constitutes a win-win situation: On the one hand, technicians gain access to the most prestigious certification in their field and, on the other hand, ETCP makes itself known to a larger group of technicians.

Finally, to us, translating the PPDT exam, or any ETCP exams for that matter, can only be seen as beneficial. Which brings us to the real question, which simply is, why not?

~ The IATSE 514 Team ■



Created in 2005, **IATSE 514** is a Montréal-based union representing some 1,600 technicians of the motion picture industry and is part of the larger IATSE family, the most important labour organization in the entertainment industry in all of North America.