

# Allan Block

*Always Better* Wall of Fame  
2024



allanblock.com



**Brad Labrie**  
**Oldcastle/Belgard**  
**Richmond, BC**

The Allan Block family is proud to show our appreciation to Brad Labrie by including him with the many people that have contributed to the success of Allan Block as we move closer to our 40<sup>th</sup> year in business. As with so many wonderful people we have the good fortune to work with, Brad has added to the success of those around him and to Allan Block in more ways than I can count. His calm methodical approach brings out the best of those he works with. Let's explore the path that has led Brad to where he is today as the Plant Manager for Oldcastle APG Canada West's Richmond facility.

At the young age of 22, Brad began his career with CCI at the Richmond plant. His father, Ernie, was a fixture at the plant with decades of experience making block. In the old days the process of making block may have been more of an art rather than a science. The old guys knew what it took to produce a high quality block and what it took to keep the machines running. It was amazing what they could fix with a cutting torch, a welder, some bailing wire, and maybe a little duct tape. Brad had a leg up on most of the young guys starting at the plant with a father that had been around the block a few times to pass along much of what he had learned. More importantly, Brad was and still is the curious type. He did not just check boxes as he did his job starting as a cuber operator, he always looked to understand how things worked to see how he could contribute to making things better. When they added a second Columbia machine at the Richmond plant Brad stepped up and added to his growing list of capabilities as a machine operator.

It was not long after the start of his career at the plant in 1996 that his curiosity and talent moved him to other positions at the plant. He was the first person I would go to when arriving at the plant to see how things were going. When he worked his way to the head of the mold shop, he was always looking for ways to make improvements. He soon found local machine shops to make adaptations to increase quality and reduce costs. As the only plant in the world to make Allan Block corners with three core pullers working in two different directions, he not only defined how to make the ultimate AB Corner, he was part of raising the standard for the entire region for what should be expected for a good segmental retaining wall block. In my travels around the world working with 100 plus plants over the years in as many markets, I shrug my shoulders at the complaints in the field. Why, because Brad helped to set a standard that requires near perfection all the time.



In addition to learning from his father, Brad was never shy about reaching out to other master block makers within the company like Al Bonin or Charlie Black. He always wanted to know everything he could to make the machine run better and the product the best it could be. When the plant got a new Hess block machine, he was the main man at the machine figuring out how to make it work. He had mastered their Columbia machines now it was time to teach the German engineers what he needed the machine to do to produce the kind of blocks that the market had grown to expect from the Richmond plant.

When Oldcastle purchased the company and Jay Fredrickson moved up to Canada to instill all safety and production requirements that have built them into one of the best building materials producers worldwide, Jay saw what Brad could do to accomplish his mission. As someone that had grown up in block plants, he knew he had the next generation leader for their British Columbia manufacturing operations.



Brad used all of his experience problem solving skills to work through the most difficult issues when starting production of a new product. Asking questions so he truly understood what was the most important elements of any of the products being brought to market. With a market footprint that ranged from Do-it Yourselfers purchasing products from the Big Box stores to an army of contractors servicing residential, commercial, and government projects through independent dealers, Brad met the demands and needs of each customer and market in stride.

As those who have spent time in block plants and have seen the pressure of keeping things going, the stress can manifest itself into frustration and tempers often flare. Brad has not only shown he can handle the pressure, he is a great example of staying cool and calm to help keep everyone around him focused on solving the problem at hand.

Brad continues to make all of those around him better at their job. He is helping to build the next generation of those that will carry forth the difficult job of not just keeping the plant running but doing so with a focus on safety and quality. Brad has many years left to contribute and we look forward to all he will yet accomplish on his road to our goal of *Always Allan Block Always Better*. From all of us at Allan Block, Thank You Brad, for all you have contributed to help build Allan Block into what it has become not only in Western Canada, but around the world.

