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Cheyenne Ruether



Becoming an Apprentice

Growing up my brothers and father would work on cars. That is where I was first exposed to working on cars. In high school, I obtained a placement in an auto shop through the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). I didn't know much about the auto body trade going into it, but I did read the general trade description on the Skilled Trades website. I choose the trade because I loved cars.

I had great success through that placement. In the industry they say that women are good at refinishing because they have a better eye for colour and design. I have always loved turning something smashed up into something renewed and beautiful.

I won two trade scholarships in my graduating year of high school. I won the RAP scholarship. I also won a scholarship that was to go to an older friend of mine that died in a car accident. That friend was older than me and was in pipe fitting. He influenced me to go into the trades.

During high school, I knew I wanted to go to school for the least amount of time. When I got out high school, I choose to continue pursuing my apprenticeship because I figured that with an apprenticeship I would at least be getting paid. I didn't want to go into college or university, and come out with tens of thousands of dollars of debt, for something I wasn't completely sure I wanted to do.

Some of the Challenges

Being an apprentice is a hard thing to do. It is kind of intimidating, but if you keep going, it will pay off in the end. Women are rare in the auto body profession, but I don't let anybody stop me from doing what I want to do.

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Finding an Employer

My original employer was found for me by the RAP coordinator. After high school, I decided to move to Edmonton because there were more auto shops and more opportunities there. I sent out some resumes and some interested employers responded, but I ended up going to work at a shop where one of the guys that I went to training with was employed.

There is a really great environment at that shop. It is family run. They are not only concerned about making money. They are very understanding and flexible about appointments. The boss is fair. He treats me as if I am on the same level as other workers. He is not easily aggravated if things go wrong. The crew is mostly young. The place is down to earth. I really enjoy who I am working with.

What Worked and What Didn't

I have a very go-go-go personality. Between auto body, modelling, running a record label, and travelling, I am always very busy. It is that energy and love for cars that has helped me succeed as an apprentice.

When looking for an employer to apprentice with, you should be conscious of how you present yourself. Simple things can help, like cleanliness. If you get an interview, don't do your shop-talk. Also, you should be prepared for a lot of work and have a lot of strength and energy.

Young people entering the trades should participate in skills competitions. I have competed in the Skills Canada competition for the last 2 years. It is great publicity for you. It looks great on your resume.

Trade: Auto Body Technician. Location: Edmonton. Year of Apprenticeship: 1st

