

Jesse Ermineskin



Becoming an Apprentice

I first got interested in motorcycle mechanics because my Dad had a bike in the garage for 10 years. One day I wanted to ride it, but it wouldn't start. I didn't know how to work on it so I ended up buying my own tiny Japanese bike one summer and learned how to ride. Later, my friend told me about a motorcycle pre-employment program that was about learning to work on motorcycles. I signed up the next day. I brought my

Dad's bike and got it up and running. I didn't know anything before I started so it was an amazing feeling of accomplishment. I knew that this was something I loved doing and it would be a fun and exciting career.

Some of the Challenges

I experienced many challenges growing up. I am a Plains Cree Aboriginal originally from Hobbema, Alberta. It was a challenging place to grow up and avoiding the pitfalls of gang violence and drugs was a full time job. Not many youth see a way to achieve a higher education. I started in the motorcycle industry in 2007 and have been working very hard. I haven't looked back. It not only provided me with money and stability, but also a future to look forward to.

Finding an Employer

It took me a couple weeks to find an employer. It was hard handing out resumes because they would take them and some wouldn't call back. I started out working at a local...shop...to get hours and experience. The problem was that my employers didn't help with my apprenticeship. I waited over a year before I actually got my apprenticeship blue book because they had a tough time finding the records for when I actually signed up as an apprentice.

While I was working at the local shop, I was also out, on my own time, trying to make a name for myself, meeting different people.... Since I was working on my Dad's Harley, I was going to different

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shops to get the parts I needed. I met one guy who owns a motorcycle service shop, but he wasn't able to hire me at the time due to shop space. However, one thing I remember was that he told me was that I was going to be working for him in the future. I kept that information with me and continued to work hard at the local shop knowing there was a different path headed for me.

My time finally came and now I'm a mechanic at a shop called 'After Dark Motorcycles'. My new employer helped me get my apprenticeship back on track. I've been working there for almost a year and the knowledge I have learned is really unbelievable. Some days I can't believe what I'm learning, and it really does feel good.

What Worked and What Didn't

One challenge is trying to learn everything on the job. If you get a job and you don't really know how to do it, you have to learn it on the spot. At school you learn so much and have to memorize everything. Then you have to put it in the field and sometimes it's a little tough.

I would say that working hard is what helped me to succeed. You need to have the ability to work in a fast paced environment and do a good job on a customer's bike. I work on these bikes as if they were my own because you want to make sure it's all safe—you wouldn't want anyone to crash!

I would like to be a role model for the younger Aboriginal children, making them believe in themselves just like I do. I really did start from nothing when I entered this career and right now it seems like the sky is the limit for me. I don't mean for them to follow as motorcycle mechanics, but to see it as a way to find their own way in a trade or a degree.

One of the biggest challenges is that it's hard to land your first job. You have to remember how hard it is to get there and then work hard when you are there. Show up on time, and don't slack off once you've been there for awhile. I couldn't see myself in any other trade or doing anything else. We work hard, but it's a lot of fun as well.

Trade: Motorcycle mechanic. Location: Edmonton, AB. Year of Apprenticeship: 2nd year

