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# Ticha Albino



## Becoming an Apprentice

I came into the trades later in life than most. I previously had many different jobs including a first aid instructor and a volunteer firefighter. I had gone to school when I was younger in the 'Women in Trades and Technology' program and I was an adult when I decided to go back to the trades, in 2005. I considered different trades and electrical seemed the most interesting. I am also really good at math and thought that a job as an electrical apprentice would be a great fit.

After I complete my apprenticeship, I hope to get into trouble shooting as that seems to be the most interesting work and the greatest challenge. I have acquired many skills through my life experiences which are helpful in advancing my understanding of the trade. Problem solving and multi-tasking are essential skills that often come best with experience. Also, my other skills, such as first aid training and confined space training have given me an edge as employers appreciate a variety of skills that can be useful on-the-job.

## Some of the Challenges

There are not many women role models in the trades. It can be hard being the only woman on a job site. Having a critical mass of women on the job can be comforting and help ease the tension. When you are the only woman, it can feel like working in a place where you don't speak a common language—when another woman joins the site, it can be a relief to have someone who 'gets it' and who you can communicate with more easily.

Focusing on doing your job well and respecting your co-workers is crucial to a successful work environment. Even when you may feel alone or isolated, you can establish respect with your co-workers through hard work. You get a great sense of accomplishment and pride from working on a project and doing the job well.

[www.caf-fca.org](http://www.caf-fca.org)



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Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage

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## Finding an Employer

The union has been very helpful and supportive in my efforts to secure work. I entered the apprenticeship program for an electrician by passing an aptitude test that was administered by my union to determine eligibility for the first year of my apprenticeship training. The union sponsored the 4 month course and I was placed in my first job off the union hiring hall list. After the first year as an apprentice electrician, the union registered me in my remaining three years of course work at the BC Institute of Technology. The union helped secure all of the jobs in between my course work. I feel protected and stronger as a union member. Some women have a hard time in non-union jobs as they often feel discriminated against. I feel very fortunate to have the union behind me. The employer goes to the union hiring hall—they cannot refuse me work because I am a woman.

Finding an employer who is willing to take the time to teach and to mentor an apprentice is very important.... Some employers don't want to take the extra time and effort to teach the more complex projects. One-on-one time with a journeyman can be invaluable as you can really learn a lot in that type of environment. You often don't get that opportunity so it's important to take advantage of it when you can. I want to be a good mentor to apprentice electricians once I am a journeyman.

## What Worked and What Didn't

Constantly improving your skills and showing a willingness to learn is very important, both for yourself and to show your employer that you are committed and hard working. Taking any training courses offered and treating your work with passion will help lead to success.

Women's issues on the job site need to be taken seriously and properly addressed. It can be a big issue such as a poisoned work environment and harassment, to specific site issues such as no separate port-a-potties. The industry has to accommodate women and other equity group members in order to remain competitive. Workplaces are changing. These are good jobs. I am proud to be an electrician. I want to be productive and to work in a respectful environment. Leadership is important, when the foreperson sets the example and will not tolerate discrimination and treats you fairly, the guys get it. Most of the guys are great to work with and I am very satisfied and proud to be an electrician.

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*Trade: Electrical. Location: Vancouver, British Columbia. Employer: IBEW (Union Hiring Hall).  
Year of Apprenticeship: 4th year*

