

HEAVY DUTY

WRITTEN: MARIA RANTANEN

PHOTO: NORIKO TIDBALL

Jatinder Rakhra likes big machines: mining equipment, demolition equipment, locomotives, bulldozers, graders, and, on Fridays, he can be found at ABC Recycling in Burnaby working on big machines, maybe repairing a shear machine - used to cut up metal for recycling - or servicing other large equipment on site. The rest of the week, he is at Vancouver Community College, studying to become a heavy-duty mechanic.

From a young age, Jatinder was exposed to heavy machinery as his father and uncle worked in construction and he spent time on job sites with them. He also loved tinkering with engines at home - his pocket bike, an electric jeep - and taking things apart to learn how they worked.

“For a long time, I wanted to operate heavy machines, but later I realized I just wanted work on the machines,” Jatinder said.

While at Windermere Secondary in 2014, Jatinder completed a mentorship pilot program, a partnership between the Vancouver School Board and the Industry Training Authority (ITA).

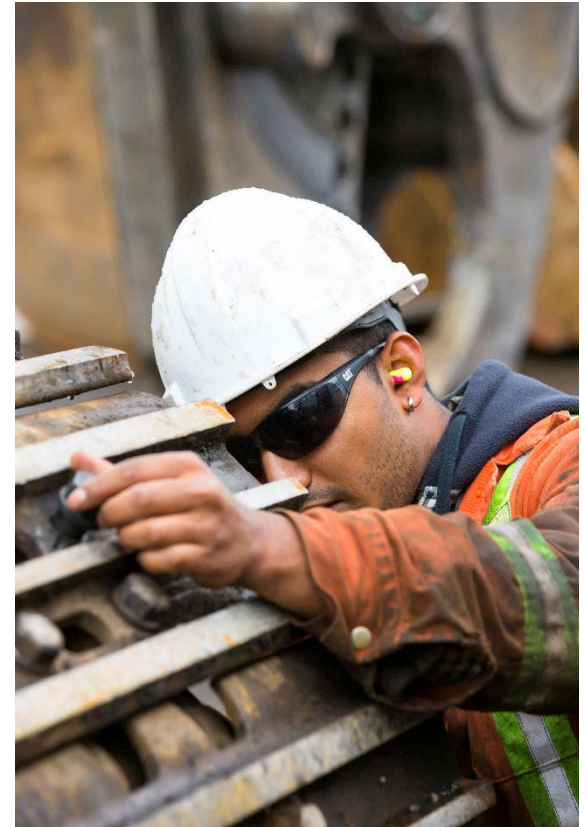
During his two-week mentorship, Jatinder was paired with a tradesperson with experience in heavy mechanical trades with whom he continues to keep in touch. During the mentorship, Jatinder worked on overhauling a ship’s engine, learned about oil changes and helped on turbo systems.

These two weeks confirmed that he really wanted to become a heavy-duty mechanic. “Doing the mentorship pretty much got me to where I am now - I still have the connections that I made through the program,” Jatinder said. “It definitely helps if you are in doubt - in a mentorship, you’re going to figure out if you like a trade or not.”

The heavy-duty mechanic course at VCC is 50 per cent theory and 50 per cent hands-on training. Opportunities will be plenty for Jatinder after he completes the program. With another year of schooling, he can become a marine engineer, a diesel technician or a commercial truck technician.

“There are so many options - you are never limited to just one thing in the trades, and the Red Seal is recognized across Canada,” Jatinder explained.

Working in heavy-duty mechanics can be labour intensive



and dirty, but Jatinder points out that there are lots of trades where you don’t get your hands dirty.

“As long as there is production, there will be jobs with good wages,” he says.

