

# AUTOMOTIVE COLLISION AND REFINISHING

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PHOTO: NORIKO TIDBALL



Chris Miller's hands slide across the surface of a recently sanded fender of an Evo Car at Gordon's Auto Body Works – he's checking the surface for any uneven spots on the recently refurbished fender.

"You have to feel for imperfections – the bodywork can't be wavy," Chris explained. "I like seeing the finished product after doing a repair – my job is to reshape it to how it was before. There's a little bit of art to it."

In spring 2015 Chris completed the eight-month Automotive Collision Repair Youth TRAIN in Trades program at Vancouver Community College as part of his Grade 12 year after being recommended to the program by his counsellor at Kitsilano Secondary.

His first job was at Dueck Marine after graduation and by the fall of 2015, he had enough hours to go back to

VCC to complete his second year. After completing his second-year courses, he landed the job at Gordon's Auto Body Works, around the corner from his former high school. Chris has been working at Gordon's for about a year and wrote his Red Seal exams in Automotive Collision Repair program in October 2016, although he still needs to finish his English 12 – something he's actively working on. After another 1,500 hours, he will be a journeyman.

Like many tradespeople, Chris prefers working with his hands rather than sitting at a desk and learning from a book.

Even while in the Youth TRAIN in Trades program, he didn't feel he was getting it in theory classes until he got to try things in practise.

"I learned most of my stuff in the shop – once you start doing it, you understand it," he said.

Fully employed, armed with a trades ticket, Chris sees a promising future for himself. He still wants to continue upgrading his skills and plans to get his painting ticket next, allowing him to work in more areas in the shop..

He recently bought his first car, a 2001 Audi S4. But instead of getting behind the wheel, he has taken it apart and is rebuilding it in a friend's garage. Eventually, he plans to get it back on the road – in the meantime, he can do what he loves best, just tinker away on cars.

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