

AUTO REFINISHING PREP TECH

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PHOTO: NORIKO TIDBALL



Writing tests isn't easy for Andy, but when he's on the shop floor working, that's when he shines. But he's willing to put in the time to get through the theoretical parts of the courses as well – sometimes, he studies so hard, he feels sick, but he is determined to reach his goal of becoming a painter.

And he's learned to use tools at his disposal – including Siri on his iPhone – to help him overcome his language barriers.

Being a prep tech requires a lot of patience and stamina, Andy explains. After the body man has finished his work – repairing the worst of the damage to a vehicle – Andy's job is to make the surface smooth and ready to be painted.

Andy's ultimate goal is to become a painter – something he's working toward, and he knows it will take "time and patience" to reach this goal.

"I take pride in my work but I know I have a long way to go," Andy says. "When you paint, you can see your work. You look at the car and you can't even tell that it's been damaged."

Andy has been working at Arbor Body Shop in South Vancouver for a couple years and he likes that the focus is on high-quality work and customer satisfaction. He doesn't feel rushed to finish a job; rather he can take his time and do the job properly.

"If you do a good job, the customer will come back," Andy explains. "I always do my best because I like my workplace – I want it to be successful. When I'm working, time goes by so fast."

Automotive Refinishing Prep Tech grad Andy Tran has some advice for those thinking about going into the trades: explore the many different options out there until you find the one you are passionate about.

"Try it out to see if you like it or not – it won't hurt to try. Then pick the right one for you."

Andy did a lot of career exploration before landing on his prep tech training. This included subjects like cooking, pet care, library work - but auto repair was the trade that caught his eye.

In Grade 12, Andy completed the Automotive Refinishing Prep Tech Youth TRAIN in Trades program, a partnership between the Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Community College.

When Andy was in high school and wanted to get into the auto refinishing program, his school supported him and advocated to get him into the program even though his English wasn't that good.

Andy arrived from Vietnam at the end of elementary school and still struggles with his English.

"My English isn't that good, but the school pushed to have me accepted," Andy explained. "People who knew me, knew I could do the work. The only way I could prove myself was to get into the program."



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