A PROFILE OF
LENAE FONTINHA

"Go for it! It's an amazing program and the skills you learn are worth it."



Getting into the trades

Lenae never planned on a career in the skilled trades. Initially, she thought she might become a counsellor, but after exploring a few different career paths, she realized this wasn't the right fit. Her journey into the trades started unexpectedly the day her car broke down. She was living in Calgary at the time. A friend who was studying automotive repair helped her fix it and as she watched she was fascinated, even though she jokes she didn't know what a ratchet was at the time! After moving back to British Columbia, she enrolled in Okanagan College's Women in Trades program, completed her Foundations training and earned her Red Seal as an Automotive Service Technician. She now works as a Trailer Technician for a manufacturer. She says she enjoys working with her hands, solving problems, staying active and learning new skills every day.

The value of a good mentor

Another key moment that has always stayed with Lenae occurred during the third year of her automotive training. She was struggling to remove a stripped Phillips screw when her mentor noticed she was having trouble. Instead of making her feel embarrassed, the mentor patiently showed her how she could solve the problem. This simple act of kindness and encouragement had a lasting impact. Looking back, she says what gave her the confidence to succeed in the trade was her mentors' patience, knowledge and willingness to take the time to teach her.

A new perspective on mentoring

Lenae admits that although her employer encouraged her to enroll in the National Development Program, this was not something she had ever considered. She now says she's so glad she did. The program completely changed her outlook on mentorship and introduced her to such topics as allyship, empathy, communication, boundaries, wellness and understanding of the impact of bias. Now that she has successfully completed the program, she looks forward to working with her first mentee. She feels much better prepared to put into practice all the she has learned when the opportunity comes.

A program she recommends

When asked what she would tell other women considering this program, Lenae's answer is simple: "Go for it!" She says the skills and knowledge she gained made the experience worthwhile and that one of the highlights was being able to connect with tradeswomen from across the country. She left the program feeling inspired and excited to one day support the next generation of skilled trades professionals through mentorship.

SUPPORTING EQUITY IN TRADES

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