

Northwestern Polytechnic Sparks Skilled Trade Success

As a teenager growing up in Dryden, Ontario, Jacqueline Fex had always enjoyed working on cars but never dreamed it could translate into a career. Fast forward several decades later, the single mother of three is completing her final year of the Automotive Service Technician Apprenticeship program at Northwestern Polytechnic (NWP).

These days Fex is role modelling for the next generation that women can successfully pursue a career in the trades—her daughter was only four years old when she helped her replace a rear axle seal on a truck in their driveway. She's also supporting her entire family on her earnings and recently bought a house.

"I feel so proud of what I've done and how far I've come," she says. "There have been hundreds of times I wanted to walk away but I didn't, and now that I look back, I am so glad I kept pushing. I can now take care of my family all on my own with just being a mechanic."

SOLID FOUNDATION

Through immersive hands-on learning, access to practical experience, and promising job opportunities, the AST Apprenticeship offers students like Fex a solid foundation for a successful career. Consisting of four 8-week classroom periods and four training periods for a minimum of 1560 hours with an employer, the program can be completed in four years.

The best part? No two days are exactly the same, says Fex. "I like the variety of the job," she says. "Even if you have 5 alignments to do in a day, they are all a little different."

EXCELLENT JOB PROSPECTS

Thanks to consistently high demand for skilled automotive technicians, and the growing shortage of qualified professionals in the industry, program graduates enjoy excellent job prospects. Whether working at dealerships, independent repair shops, or specialized service centers, graduates like Fex can choose from a wide range of options, says Martin Larsen, an instructor in the AST program at NWP.

"She could continue as a journeyman with her current employer or go anywhere across Canada," he says. "She could take on a different role like service management or go back to school to train as a dual mechanic, through the Heavy Equipment program or at NWP's Harley-Davidson® Training Centre, which is the only one of its kind in Canada."

SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Fex particularly appreciates the strong sense of community and familiarity she has encountered on the Fairview campus. "I really love the small-town vibe here and everyone has been so friendly and supportive," she says. "Classes are a nice size—there were 16 students in my first year and only five in my second year. Sometimes we'll grab a coffee or a bite to eat after class."

"All the instructors have been really great as well - they worked well with me and were always willing to answer any questions."

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