

Invermere Valley Echo

Trades students get hands-on experience

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Byline: Dave Lazzarino

A co-operative approach to learning is offering some new tricks to go with the old trades in Invermere.

The College of the Rockies (COTR) course, Intro to Trades, which promises to present over 140 skilled trades as well as over 40 Red Seal trades available in B.C., just kicked off this week. What is different about it, though, is that students are getting more than just the classroom experience.

The students are going to be spending almost two weeks with Dave Ridge, owner of Fairmont Ridge Renovations in Invermere.

Ridge employs 25 full-time tradespeople to provide building services to the community, and according to COTR manager Doug Clovechok there is no limit to the skills students can learn from them.

"They've been doing safety training all week," said Clovechok, adding, "They're going to be doing everything from drywall and electric and everything down the road."

The class allows anyone to either develop a passion for the trades and get a feel for where they might want to specialize or, if nothing piques their interest, try it all out before sinking thousands of dollars and years of their time into it.

It began with an orientation that included what is expected of tradespeople as well as what builders look for when employing people, giving students a leg-up on the competition when attempting to turn their schooling into paid work.

"It gets them into the real-life aspect of it instead of just reading a book or watching a video," said Ridge.

There is a positive side for the local building industry as well. "It takes years and years of time to build people, develop people, find people and groom them as career-oriented individuals who appreciate where they are and what they do," said Ridge, adding that courses like these help get that ball rolling.

As a result, Ridge has agreed to donate the money he has been given to teach the course back into the school to help future students. "You don't see this kind of thing every day," said Clovechok who said they have spoken about using the donated money toward a scholarship of sorts for tradespeople.

The trades course goes for another month, until the end of March.

As well, COTR is also running something for the more business minded builder.

The Registered Housing Professional Series is a handful of workshops that run over a six-month period that teaches the business side of running a successful development company and offers students the ability to earn their Registered Housing Professional designation.

For more on courses offered by the COTR, get online to www.cotr.bc.ca/

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