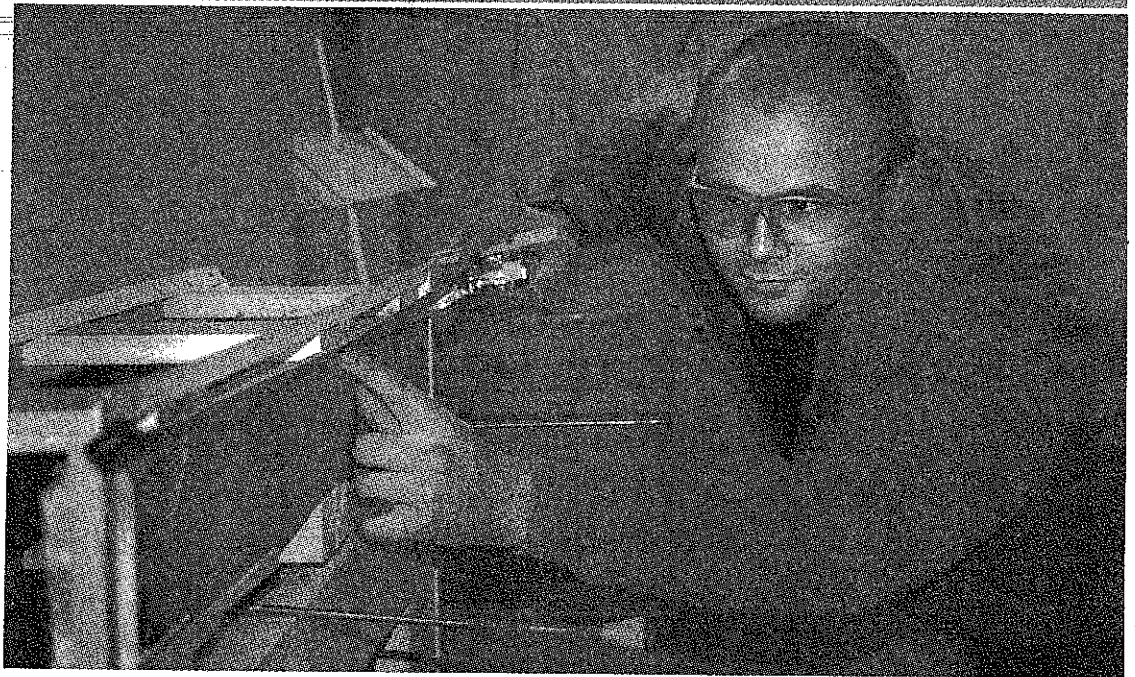


Okanagan College Trades Training



JAMES MURRAY/OBSERVER

On edge: Okanagan College carpentry student Brian Hammond works in the trades training centre, which is destined for expansion.

Fusing tools, textbooks

By Martha Wickett
OBSERVER STAFF

The high-pitched whine of a saw meets the ear while the aromatic scent of a fresh-cut two-by-four greets the nostrils.

This is Okanagan College's Trades Centre in Salmon Arm's industrial park, bustling this particular morning with carpentry students learning the ins and outs of laying concrete for a commercial building.

Student Brian Hammond, who's in his second year, talks enthusiastically about the

program.

Although he has spent seven years working in construction, when the recession hit in 2008, he was laid off. That winter, he wasn't able to find work – which turned out to be a good motivator. He decided to get his journeyman carpenter ticket, rather than continuing to work indefinitely as an apprentice.

He says there is a lot of book learning in the program, including building codes and proper building practices.

"It's awesome, I've

learned a ton. It makes you a faster, smarter carpenter; it teaches you to think. You get the confidence and ability to run a job."

He notes that although the program is six hours per day for six weeks, there is three for four hours of homework every night.

Financially, the program is also a good thing for students.

Hammond says government incentives means he's making a good wage while he's learning.

Angus Wood is the carpentry instructor.

He says he's been a carpenter "for a long

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Okanagan College Trades Training

Investing in the future

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time" and loves the work. He's still in carpentry, "but I love teaching as well."

The program is a four-year course of six weeks each year.

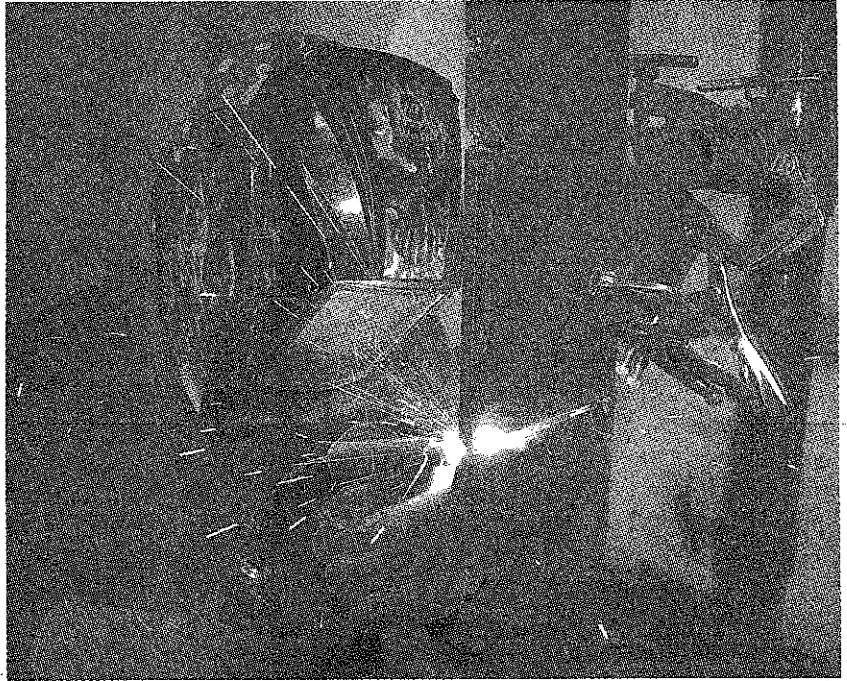
A lot of the students have already been working in the industry, he says, many for two or more years.

In the first couple of years, students learn about all aspects of carpentry.

Years three and four focus on areas such as finishing carpentry, stairs, cabinets, roofing, blueprint and contract reading, building codes, heavy timber and steel stud wall construction.

Up to now, years one and two have been taught in Salmon Arm and years three and four in Kelowna. That will change, thanks to a \$1 million federal/provincial funding injection for a local expansion.

Trades programs in Salmon Arm are also offered in welding, electrical, plumbing and residential construction.



JAMES MURRAY/OBSERVER

Precision: Okanagan College welding class student Adrian Halvorson practises gas metal arc welding in a classroom setting.

College program administrator Janet Lemieux says the pre-apprenticeship programs are for students who want to enter the fields but haven't been working in them already.

Apprenticeships include the technical training plus work hours. Students are awarded some work hours from their college programs, and

finish with sponsored employment.

"It really helps students," says Lemieux. "It gives them a real advantage when looking for employment. An employer knows that they have all the safety training, they know what all the tools are, they know the basics of the trade so they don't have to spend a lot of time giving them

an orientation. They already have a lot of the skills they need and can put them to work right away."

The plumbing, electrical and welding courses are all about 24 weeks total.

With the residential construction program, students get carpentry as well as a residential construction framing certificate.