

local news

▼ OKANAGAN COLLEGE

Auto mechanic students finish 1-2 in skills challenge

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Okanagan College sent two students to the B.C. Skills Canada Competition in the automotive collision repair category. They returned from Abbotsford with gold and silver medals.

"They are absolute tops in their field," said OC automotive collision repair instructor Jeff Francis, about winners Tyler Selzer and Brian Wellington.

Selzer, who won gold, is originally from Quesnel but has lived and worked in Kelowna for the past two years.

The third year apprentice works at Springfield Auto Body. Every year he spends one month at OC taking the classes he needs to move up the apprentice ladder.

Selzer first entered a B.C.

Skills welding competition when he was in Grade 9, taking third place.

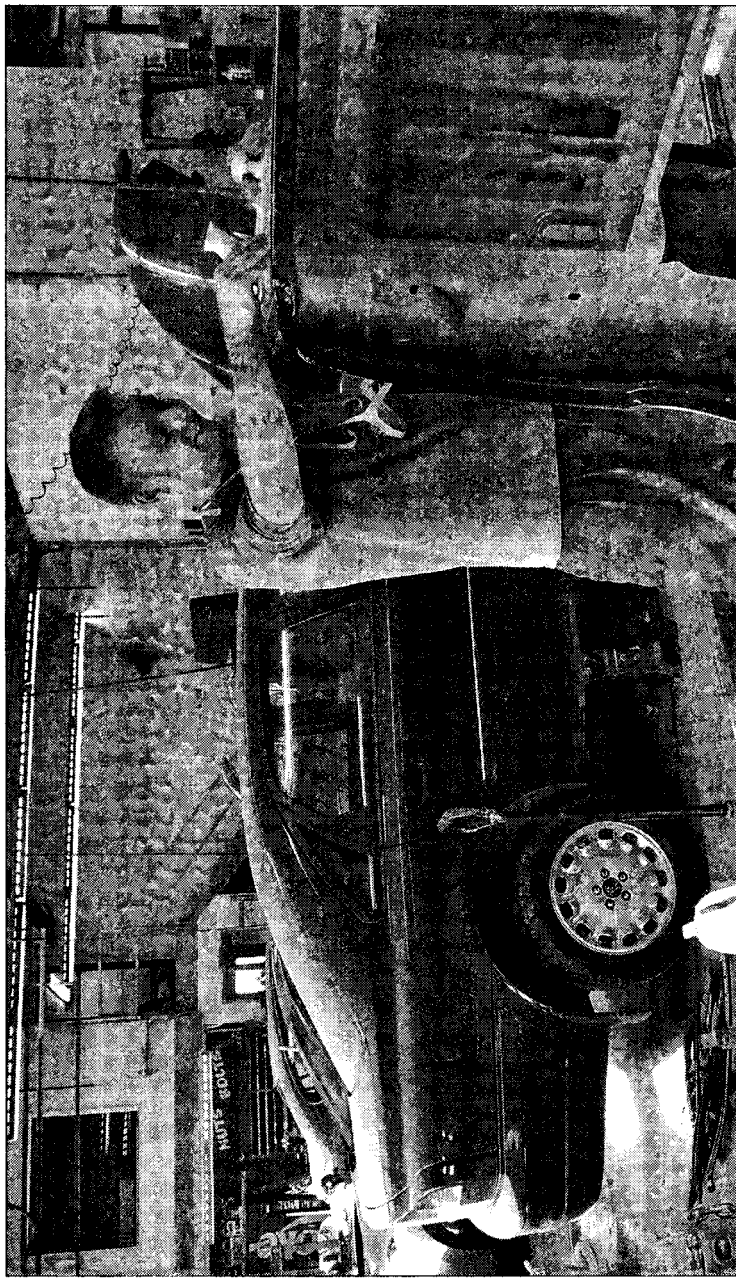
"My first shop that I worked up in Quesnel, Centerline Collision, he actually hired me right off the street just because I had entered that welding competition and welding is a big part of auto body work," he said.

Selzer, who built hot rods in his spare time, quickly showed an aptitude for body work.

His current boss, Garry Grigg, said Selzer stands out "big time" over other apprentices.

Asked what makes Selzer stand out, Grigg replied, "attitude is the biggest issue plus he has the ability...he has a passion which a lot of people don't have."

Francis said Selzer has consistently performed well



ADRIAN NIEOCZYM/CAPITAL NEWS

B.C. SKILLS CANADA gold medal winner, Tyler Selzer, works on restoring a truck (in foreground) at Springfield Auto Body.

during his time at OC. "I taught Tyler through first, second and third year of his apprenticeship and he was always at the top of his class."

He added Selzer has an ability to look at a damaged car and see the steps needed to restore it to its original condition.

"It's a measuring stick in some regards...we use it as a

means of seeing how our students do across the province compared to VCC and BCIT."

Vancouver Community College and the British Columbia Institute of Technology are the other B.C. colleges with significant automotive collision repair programs.

Selzer now gets to go to

Calgary and compete in the Canada wide skills competition from May 25 to 28.

Grigg said it will take Selzer a few years to realize the significance of what he's accomplished. "He won't realize how lucky and how much it means until later. It's sort of blurred right now I'm sure."