



## It's all in the family: father-daughter duo reflects on changing industry

As an RV Service Technician instructor at Okanagan College, Victor Flint welcomes hundreds of new faces to the classroom but none so familiar as his own daughter, Sharla, who is proudly following in his footsteps to become a Red Seal RV Technician in the Okanagan.

Sharla Flint has recently completed her Recreation Vehicle Service Technician Foundation program at the College and is currently doing her apprenticeship at Voyager RV Centre in Kelowna, B.C. Sharla and Victor – who as an instructor and business owner of Family First Mobile RV Services – have both had firsthand experience in an industry that is experiencing unprecedented levels of demand.

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“The pandemic has had some interesting impacts in the RV world and even with dealerships paying higher wages and offering more competitive employment benefits, they still can’t meet the demand the entire nation is feeling right now for RV technicians,” explains Victor. “In fact, most RV dealerships can barely even keep RVs for sale in stock, there is a noticeable shortage.”

While the industry has been steadily growing year after year, the pandemic-related provincial and national travel restrictions has unveiled RVing as both a hobby and vacation of choice.

“The demand for RVs as a vacation option is a huge trend,” says Sharla. “While it seems the provincial restrictions are starting to open up, people are still not travelling to their normal destinations and are in desperate need of a well-deserved vacation – RVing is a no-brainer.”

With the economic impacts from the pandemic and the increasingly rising real estate market in the Okanagan – where bidding wars and sales well above list price are frequent – the local RV industry has noted an upward shift in people choosing to live in an RV unit as their primary residence.

“With the economy and the real estate market in Kelowna we’re noticing people choosing to use RVs in different ways, not just as a vacation tool, but as a permanent or semi-permanent residence,” says Victor.

“I come across a lot of people who live full-time in their RVs and I have to say, we’re quite privileged to work on their homes,” says Sharla. “I’ve heard of young couples living in their RV to save up for a down payment on a house and I see a lot of retirees moving to the RV life as well.”

The demand for RVs as a vacation outlet and as a primary residence is not the only trend Victor and Sharla have noted either.

“Over the last five years teaching, I’ve noticed a steady increase of females in the classroom and the workforce,” says Victor. “I think that is what makes this trade one of the most unique trades out there.”

“As a female in this industry I can honestly say that I don’t get treated any differently and it has been very accepting, very fair and very welcoming,” says Sharla.

Victor is preparing for another student intake in the fall for the RV Service Technician Apprenticeship program for which he will welcome Sharla and several other females into the program.

“As an RV Tech instructor and RV service business owner, I get a really unique look at the talent coming into the programs and what is coming up next for the industry,” explains Victor. “I’ve always considered RV Service Technician as an important and in-demand career and the current landscape of the industry only supports that claim.”

Why did Sharla choose the RV Technician program? The variety.

“The RV program has so many different trades all wrapped into one, the versatility of this career is amazing and you’re never doing the same thing twice,” she says. “Once you complete your Red Seal, you can basically go anywhere in Canada and have a job tomorrow.”

Okanagan College offers the only entry-level Recreation Vehicle Service Technician program in Canada.

**The next RV Service Technician program starts September 2021.**

For more information, program details and to apply for the program, visit [okanagan.bc.ca/rv](http://okanagan.bc.ca/rv).

