

Carpentry: Tiny House – Pt. 1

by Stu Rhodes

We're not just building houses, we're building sustainable futures! Saanich School District is launching a revamped version of their Carpentry program this February.

The program will be hosted at SD63 Continuing Education School on Mt Newton Cross Road where students will learn the basics of the craft under the tutelage of teacher Brandon Heyer. Brandon brings a wealth of construction experience as well as exemplary teaching skills to this innovative program. Students will spend three days per week learning about carpentry and putting their skills to practice as they construct a "tiny house." On Thursdays and Fridays students will take their skills to industry where they will get a chance to see the real world as fledgling apprentices with local building contractors.

Upon successful completion of this five-month pilot, students will transition to Camosun College during July and August to participate in a Level One Apprenticeship class. They'll earn "dual credit" course credits that count on their high school and college transcripts as credits toward their eventual trade certification. Once the Camosun portion of the training is finished, students will return to industry on a full-time basis with their employers.

The class project of building a tiny house will be sponsored in part by the Construction Foundation of BC. The mandate of CFBC is to, "help build the next generation of skilled workers in BC." To that end they've made a significant commitment to help with the acquisition of building materials for the tiny house. CFBC Executive Director, Abigail Fulton, expressed her delight in the newly forged partnership: "We are very pleased to be partnering with the Saanich School District on this exciting project. Applied learning creates attitudes, skills and knowledge in our youth that will serve them well throughout their life – whether it's pursuing an exciting career in the trades, or simply solving every day problems. Building this tiny house will enable students to not only learn new skills and apply them, but also engage in a project that focuses on sustainability – for the environment, for the community and for industry."

Indeed, sustainability is a consistent theme of this endeavour. The tiny house will feature a number of green technology concepts, the

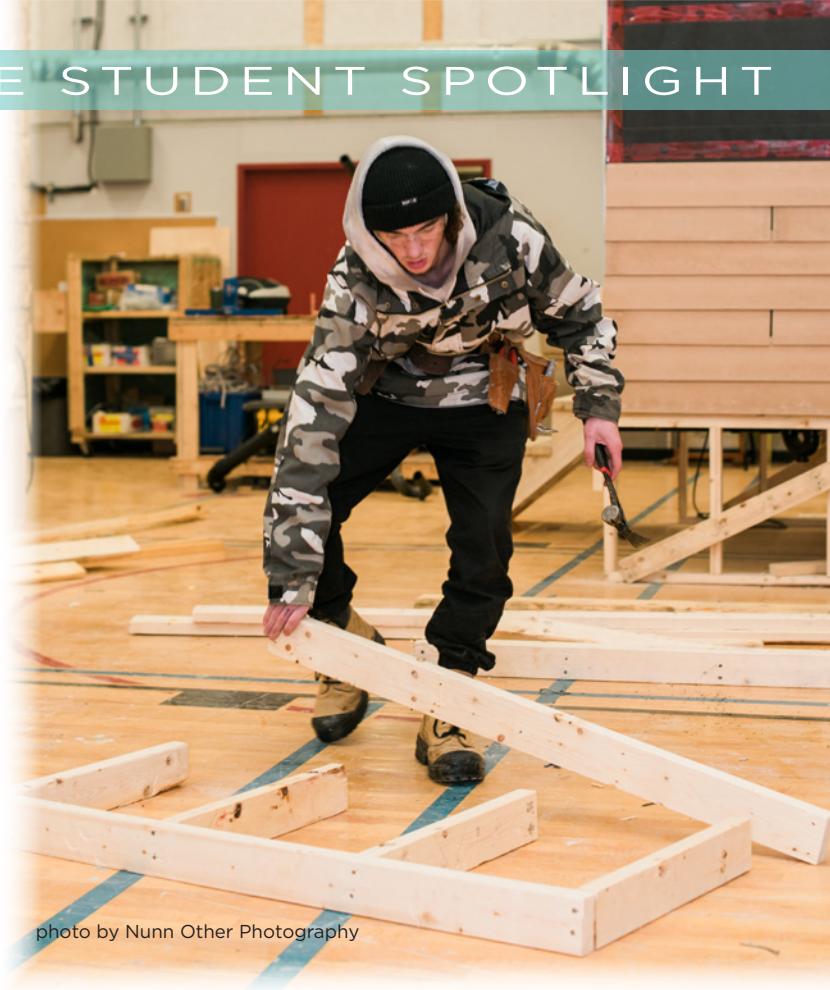


photo by Nunn Other Photography

technical training and transition to work will enable graduates to make a sustainable living, and their contributions to the labour pool of the construction sector will help industry to remain sustainable in an ever evolving marketplace.

CFBC works very closely with Vancouver Island Construction Association. Many VICA members have already stepped up to offer work placements for students. This transition to work component will be one of the hallmarks of this program as it really gives students the opportunity to sample the nature of the work and the culture of the workplace.

Wendy Walker, principal of SD63 Continuing Education, couldn't be happier with the new model for this pilot and the new partnership established with CFBC. "Equipping students with the appropriate technical skills and simultaneously providing them with an opportunity to gain relevant work experience will provide the perfect recipe for success. Positioning our program ahead of the intensive, traditional apprenticeship class gives students a longer runway so they can build confidence in their abilities and better relate theoretical concepts to tangible learning experiences on actual construction sites."

Stay tuned over the coming months as we follow the project and eventually learn where the tiny house finds its "home."