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photo by Amanda Cribdon Photography

Celeste Huysmans: Breaking Down Barriers

While this month's edition of *Seaside Magazine* is focused on Men to Watch, we decided to profile a female student who is making inroads in a male-dominated trade. Women currently make up just four percent of the electrical and construction trades. Celeste Huysmans is hoping to change this number and become a role model for other young women who want to become electricians.

Celeste is a recent graduate from Claremont Secondary who is actively taking a position of leadership in many of her recent endeavors. In grade 11 and 12, Celeste took part in the Women In Trades Days workshop at Camosun and said that this event "definitely motivated me. It reassured me that there is a spot for hard working women in the trades."

She has also enjoyed following in her dad's footsteps. Celeste's father, Rich Huysmans, is the owner and lead electrician of Rich's Electric. Celeste often helped on job sites and was able to develop her skills and understanding of the trade from him. She says: "Learning from my dad has been an amazing experience; he teaches me new strategies every day and shows me what it takes to be the best I can be." Celeste loves that each day is a new challenge. She enjoys the personal touches of working with the clients and making their wishes and ideas a reality.

When Celeste mentioned that she worked for her dad to a career teacher, Garry Arsenault, he quickly signed her up as a Youth Apprentice and has supported her in her journey. The Youth Work in Trades Program is a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Industry Training Authority. This program allows students up to the age of 19 to earn high school credit while they are learning on-the-job technical skills. The other students that we have featured this year did a pre-apprentice or foundation program first and then were indentured as a youth apprentice. Students can, however, start working as a youth apprentice and go on to college to earn their certification.

Having a father with his Red Seal certification made it easy for Celeste to break down the barriers, and to transition to the world of work as an electrician. It is a comfortable, supportive, and familiar environment for her. Celeste finds that she is not only supported by the people she works with but also the customers she works for. She has found, and we have seen, a shift in the attitude in our community toward seeing a woman in trades. Celeste feels it is becoming the new norm. She hopes to complete her Red Seal, so that she can take her certification anywhere in the world to practise her trade. Always learning, Celeste knows that the job will become more technical and rewarding as time moves on.

We will be presenting Celeste with her \$1,000 Youth Work in Trades Award soon.

For more information Women in Trades Training please visit www.itabc.ca/women-trades/overview.

