

AUTOMOTIVE TECHNICIAN PROGRAM
55+ YEARS OF TRAINING
since 1949

There was a need for Trades Training for released Military Service Personnel coming back from World War II. In 1949 William D. Bland (Danny) and Ron Bryant co-authored British Columbians first Auto Mechanics apprenticeship curriculum under the banner of Vancouver Vocational Institute, at Pender Street.

This Trades Program for 2 classes of 12 months duration for 12 students under each instructor was based upon Danny and Ron's basic automotive curriculum.

The trade of Auto Mechanics is, and always has been a highly practical and hands on skill, where theory must be translated and demonstrated in workshop action. This is the only way for understanding to take place. The course was therefore devised with +25% theory and 75% practical, working with normal customer dirty cars with problems. This allowed students to follow real life diagnostics, troubleshooting, and repair procedures.

Many changes and upgrades to the program have taken place and though it is hardly recognizable from the original curriculum offered; the same advantage of 25% theory and 75% practical is still maintained.

The 1-year course was quickly expanded to 3 classes of 12 students each while the curriculum was constantly upgraded with the new technology of the times. Today we laugh about it, but such things as alternators, automatic transmissions, air conditioning and electronic ignition were thought of as BIG CHANGES!

Concurrent with this 12 months entry-level course, these two dynamic ex-servicemen initiated and developed training programs for night school, upgrading and apprenticeship, which proved extremely popular because of the similar mix of theory/practical, and the reputation of instructors.

The 1980's heralded major changes! And these major changes are still being introduced continuously.

First the program was moved to new premises in 1984 and fell under the administration of King Edward Campus of VCC. It was also expanded, due to runaway technology and the dire need for new technicians to take care of the new vehicles using components based on the electronics revolution.

Four modules for 16 students per section were developed and students were able to elect whether to attend the whole course or a module in which they felt they were in need of upgrading.

The modules were:

- Brakes,Suspension,Tires,Alignment
- Engines, Cooling & Lubrication
- Standard & Auto Transmission, Transaxles, Transercases, Clutches, Axles & Drivelines
- Electronics, Fuel Management & Batteries

During the 55 odd years the program has been offered, student demand has always exceeded space available and at times there was an unfortunate backlog and waiting list of up to 2 years.

Student pre requisites have naturally tightened, to the extent that totally fluent English reading and writing is necessary as technicians have to follow technically worded repair manuals and complicated test procedures. Also a high grade of math and science is a necessity.

The program is still being updated and adjusted almost monthly to take advantage of modern computer diagnostics and new electronic repair equipment.

Also, due to our diverse ethnic population mix and the popularity of Automotive Technician as a career with persons who do not have English as a first language, changes and new approaches with novel ideas from our well respected VCC English language-training department are continually added.

Co-Authored

William D. Bland:(Danny)

Danny began his career in the automotive field in 1947 with extensive certification relating to all facets of the automotive trade. He completed his Teacher-Training certificate in 1950 and began working with the College when it was first named, Vancouver Vocational Institute.



In 1970 he helped to set up the automotive program at Vancouver Vocational Institute for pre-apprentices, which consisted of Tune-up, Engine, Brakes and Transmission. After 25 years of service he was recognized for his outstanding contribution and his dedication to service in 1974.

In his youth, Danny was well known for his cowboy days when he worked on the Douglas Ranch, between Merritt and Kamloops as a cattle rancher in the 1930's.

Today, Danny judges the horse shows for British Columbia.

[Back to top](#)

Retired Faculty



"Howie" Olsen:

Instructed in the Automotive Technician department from 1971 till **1999 when he retired**. During his stint he served as department head for about 10 years and oversaw the transition to "hi-tech" modern training, and a student enrolment increase from 48 to 64 students per year. He enjoyed the students and his ties with the automotive trade, and did his best to impart his love and enjoyment in their chosen careers.



George Weigel:

George joined VVI in 1980 and worked as a regular instructor through till **retirement in 2001**. He always performed his work in a professional serious manner and made a point of taking all promising students under his wing, finding good work for them and helping them when in need. He also made a significant contribution to many of the program improvements and upgrades.



Glen Johnston:

Started teaching Ford Emission Control Systems at Vancouver Vocational Institute in 1974. In 1976 he became a full time Automotive Instructor and remained till his **retirement in August of 2002**. He enjoys rebuilding old car engines, woodworking and working on his motor home.

