

Earning a Red Seal provides a sense of accomplishment and new career opportunities

by Gloria Welton

Roger Kelly of Cardigan has been in the construction business for more than 25 years. He had always wanted to be nationally certified in his trade. It would recognize his skills in his trade and would give him credibility as a professional carpenter.

Several years ago, Roger first attempted to achieve the Red Seal certification. "I had the same feeling of apprehension as most people would," says Roger. "I felt I knew my trade very well and wanted to gain Red Seal Certification, so I decided to give the exam a shot. But I was experiencing self doubt and a fear of failure and was lacking experience in study skills and exam writing. I fell short by a few points."

Last year, Roger again started to work towards passing the Interprovincial Standards Examination for carpentry to earn his Red Seal. This time he took part in the **Trades Essentials** carpentry program. "After participating in the Trade Essentials carpentry program, I wrote the exam again and passed with a high mark."

Steps taken in the trade

Roger says he has always enjoyed the satisfaction of working with his hands and learning. "After high school I took the **Carpentry and Cabinetmaking** program. From there I started building and selling log homes working as an Apprentice."

Apprenticeship is a training program used to develop a new generation of skilled trades people. It combines on-the-job trade experience under the direction of a journeyman with periods of college instruction.

Roger has owned **Kelly Log Homes** for most of his trades career. "My business has evolved into primarily residential and commercial construction. I have also worked with various community organizations as site supervisor for their community development projects. I am currently working on an expansion project at the Harbourview Training Center in Souris."

Values life-long learning

A few years ago, Roger started substitute-teaching in Carpentry with Montague Regional High School. "I enjoyed the experience and wanted to develop my skills as an instructor. I have almost finished working towards my **Certificate in Adult Education**, which is available jointly through **Holland College** and **UPEI**."

Trades people who are hired as high school **Technology Education Teachers** require a Letter of Authority from the **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**. They have three years to earn a Certificate in Adult Education.



"I got such personal satisfaction and a feeling of self-worth from earning my Red Seal," says Roger. "Since I earned this designation, I have been offered a part-time position as a carpentry instructor for the very same program that helped me to prepare for the Red Seal exam. I teach the **Carpentry Trade Essentials** program two evenings a week and this fits in fine with operating my business."

"This program provides a chance to really prepare for the Red Seal exam. When I was participating in the program, I was part of a group of carpenters who were all working towards the same goal. We went over all of the essential (necessary) skills needed to successfully pass the exam."

"One skill we learned was reading technical language such as the code books used for construction. Carpenters may not be exposed to these code books on a regular basis throughout their careers, yet the Red Seal exam requires that you are familiar with this information."

"Numeracy is another area we reviewed. Carpenters work with math every day but in an exam situation the math problems can be potentially confusing. The math review was excellent preparation."

"Another part of the program is study skills and exam writing skills. The program covers such techniques such as scanning the entire exam before you get started. Also, we learned that it is important to keep going from one question to the next. If you get stuck on a question, skip it and go back to it at the end. This will help you make good use of the allotted time."

"I have operated a construction business for a number of years. Now that I have completed the Red Seal training and certification, I can explore career opportunities with renewed confidence and take pride in my work as a certified skilled carpenter."



About Trade Essentials

The Trade Essentials pilot project is the only one of its kind in Canada. The project focuses on updating the Essential Skills needed to successfully move forward in a trades career and to achieve trades certification.

These skills include:

- reading technical language for the trade
- using documents such as charts and blueprints
- math
- oral communication
- written communication
- computer skills.

"Trade Essentials helps Apprentices learn the Essential Skills required and they are having great success," says **Karen Chandler**, Essential Skills Coordinator. "During the first year of the project, 90 percent of participants successfully challenged the Red Seal exam after completing Essential Skills programs."

This year, programs were offered again for carpenters. New programs for plumbers, welders and automotive service technicians are in progress.

This project is developing materials for programs in preparation to write the Red Seal exam for the following 13 trades:

- Auto Service Technician
- Cabinet Maker
- Carpenter
- Construction Technician
- Cook
- Industrial Electrician
- Machinist
- Metal Fabricator
- Oil Burner Mechanic
- Plumber
- Pipefitter/Steamfitter
- Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic
- Welder

Who can apply?

Anyone who is eligible to be registered as an Apprentice or is working in a trade and has met the requirements of Apprenticeship to challenge the certification (Red Seal) exam may apply. The program is available at no cost. Classes are held in the evenings, with flexible schedules that aim to suit each Apprentice. Programs are not available in every trade.



For more information about **Trade Essentials**, contact **Doreen Eynon** at 620-3623 or visit www.tradeessentials.ca

For more information about **Essential Skills**, visit <http://srv108.services.gc.ca>

For more information about **Apprenticeship**, visit www.gov.pe.ca and search **Apprenticeship**

Funding for Trade Essentials is provided by the government of Canada's Pan-Canadian Innovations Initiative and is co-managed by the Apprenticeship Section of the PEI Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning.