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RICHMOND REVIEW

An environmental education

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Students of the Environmental Protection Technology diploma program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Mark Patrick

Walking into kitchens in disrepair, Caron Adderley is happy to be covered in the puffy, resilient hazardous materials suit. Armed with respiratory protection, she is guarded from the acrid smell of cooked chemicals that still wafts through the homes. Glass beakers and burnt pots and pans strewn across countertops, Adderley inspects the derelict remnants of meth labs.

Adderley works for Hazco Environmental Services in Richmond as a hazardous waste technician. Whether in the field, or in the company's yards, she spends most days inspecting the remnants of people's chemistry experiments gone wrong.

"It's exciting knowing that you are going into a dangerous situation because you still have the equipment to protect you," said Adderley.

Adderley is a graduate of the two-year Environmental Protection Technology diploma program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

A former police officer from Bermuda, Adderley signed up for Kwantlen's program because of its co-op education component which would allow her to get work experience in her field. She signed up for the program with a desire to use her knowledge of science in a job and was able to do her work experience at Hazco, who offered her a job when she finished.

"We graduate having the skills we were going to use at work," said Adderley.

During her time at Kwantlen, she learned extensively about the personal protective equipment she now wears on a daily basis, strengthening her resolve to wear it because she knows the consequences of going without. She also learned a lot about different components of chemistry, something she also uses in her job.

Because the Kwantlen program was so hands-on, Adderley had always felt confident in her abilities to do her job.

As part of her requirements for Kwantlen, Adderley also participated in a community action project with other students to try and end the use of cosmetic pesticides in Surrey. Love our Environment - Eliminate Pesticides, known as LEEP, went to Surrey City Council and asked for the implementation of a bylaw all as a school project.

Paul Richard, chair of the Environmental Protection department, said the program was developed to deal with a heightened awareness of environmental issues.

"Things are getting a lot more hot to ensure that everything's being done sustainably," said Richard.

The program gives students a basic education in the sciences - biology, ecology, chemistry and physics, with a focus on environmental studies. Students learn how to collect various samples from bodies of water and soil, proper inspection techniques and environmental law among other things.

The program is geared towards students who want to get into environmental consulting, typically for large businesses or for the government, but students can end up anywhere in any job, like Adderley.

"It's difficult to say, "Here's your typical student", " said Richard.

Richard said the program has a very high success rate for students finding jobs after graduation.

More information about the Environmental Protection Technology program can be found at <http://www.kwantlen.ca/calendar/programs/enprot.html>.