

Shattering Stereotypes

Hilary Noack is challenging the status quo by creating Canada's first all-female auto body repair shop. — *Krystyna Lagowski*

Hilary Noack can trace her fascination with cars right back to her childhood. "I hung around my dad when I was a kid," she confesses. "And then, I took shop classes in high school."

But it was 12 years ago, when Noack bought a 1970 Oldsmobile that things got serious. She did a co-op at a local body shop to fix up her classic ride and was well and truly hooked. "I love the aesthetic of it," Noack confesses. "The prepping, the filler work, spraying, block sanding—and then, after it's painted, taking pride in what you did with your own two hands."

Now, having worked as a licensed technician at Legendary Motorcar and 427 Collision, as well as being an instructor at Centennial College, Noack is set to open Ink & Iron the first all-female autobody shop in Canada.

Male-Dominated Field

Noack wants to create a professional environment that will welcome female customers. "I want women to feel comfortable and relaxed," she says. "Having an all-female shop will set a different tone. We have the same concerns, and can empathize with each other."

In fact, Noack has heard from plenty of men who want to bring her their cars. "When you work in a male-dominated field, you have to work twice as hard," she notes.

Joining Noack in the adventure is her sister, Emily—a level 2 apprentice—as well as Olivia DiGianfelice, a level 1 apprentice. Recently, the team launched an Indiegogo campaign to

help crowd-source her funding, which turned many heads in the media.

A savvy businesswoman as well as an experienced tech, Noack realizes the industry is in dire need of qualified labour. She intends to use her shop as a training

"I don't see why being a man or a woman should matter in this business."

*Hilary Noack, owner,
Ink & Iron*

ground for female body shop technicians. "I've heard from women who want to get into this field, but they couldn't find a shop to take them on," she says. "I think it's important to pass on my skills, to help train someone become a good technician. I want to see more girls getting into this trade"

Change for the Better

Everywhere she goes, Noack says people are asking her to help find staff. "I get many girls asking me what I do, and they tell me they're very interested," she says. "It's weird to me, it's a job. I wish women wouldn't be so intimidated and just go ahead and try it."

Noack notes that she's had a lot of help along the way. "Everyone has been really great and supportive," she says. "I've always had a great, positive environment to work in."



Hilary Noack

As far as the future goes, Noack predicts that regulations will tighten up. "But that's a good thing," she says. "The focus will shift towards enforcing training... mandating courses like I-CAR will be huge. As the Ontario College of Trades enforces certification and registration, the quality of work will go up. It will be a change for the best."

And Noack predicts there will be more women in the industry. "I don't see why being a man or a woman should matter in this business," she says. 🌈